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This is Me in Grade 9, Baby:
Social Relations, Discourse Practices and Identity Positions

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This study is an examination of community practices in a junior high classroom in an urban area of Western Canada. The theoretical framework draws on the work of sociocultural theorists: Lave and Wenger's communities of practice; Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's theories on language and learning; and theoretical writing that reflects on identity and identity formation. The purpose of the study was to determine what contribution these theoretical perspectives, which focus on the situated and social nature of learning, can make to the study of social interaction in a classroom setting.

Research for this ethnographic case study was conducted in a Grade 9 language arts class in an inner city school over the course of one school year. Approximately 75% of the students in the school were of Asian heritage (Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Chinese in order of population concentration) and a large number of students spoke English as a second language. Data collection included participant observation of classroom student-teacher and student-student interaction, contextual field notes, teacher and classroom documents, samples of student writing, newspaper articles about the school, and transcripts from audiotaped semi-structured interviews with students and teachers.

The practices that emerged from the data and are described in this work can be grouped into three broad categories: social relations; discursive organization; and identity construction. Analysis of the data showed that particular practices that developed within the community of practice either facilitated or constrained participation of classroom members and, in turn, defined possibilities for learning. Study findings emphasised the role of the teacher in disrupting community practices that limit and marginalize students.

Concurrently, this work showed the ways in which teacher practices may be shaped by the social structure of the classroom community.

This study shows how research undertaken from a community of practice and other sociocultural perspectives allows for a more complex understanding of the social context of teaching and learning. As Canadian classrooms become increasingly diverse, there is a need for greater understanding of the interrelatedness of ethnicity, class, and gender when attempting to understand the ways in which social relations are formed, identities are constructed and academic success is understood. Suggestions as to how pre-service and in-service teacher education could embrace these challenges are presented.

Dedication

In memory of my mother

who loved to

listen to Leonard Cohen

and

critique the educational system

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PROLOGUE

The birds they sang
at the break of day
Start again,
I heard them say,
Don't dwell on what
has passed away
or what is yet to be.

It was a disconcerting place to be–at the **start (again),** so many months into my research project. I could not hear the birds; break of day was long passed. I was dwelling in about equal measures on what was passed (my ideal, hypothetical research study) and what was yet to be (salvaging my actual, flawed research project). The hypothetical class I had written about in my candidacy proposal was different from the actual in ways significant enough to drastically affect my research project … Time for a Leonard Cohen CD.

Ring the bells that still can ring.
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything.
That's how the light gets in.

When it came to the song, *Anthem,* something happened. In my bleak mood, there was a glimmer of light. I heard the words differently. It struck me that a parallel could be made between the refrain and my research project. *There is a crack in everything*. Certainly my research project was cracked, flawed. This had been made all too clear to me a month or two before when a professor on my supervisory committee had suggested that I consider my project a pilot study, and begin the research again the following year. I was totally unprepared for such a devastating setback–I had not realized the imperfections in my research project were potentially so serious. While I was well aware that very little had gone according to plan, there *were* some surprising interactions going on in the grade 9 class that I was curious to explore further. Plus, the interviews I had begun with the students were proving to be fascinating, not in the ways I had anticipated, but…isn't *that how the light gets in?* It may mean having to rewrite the research questions and rework the theoretical framework, but I knew that what I was witnessing in my research site was nonetheless of significance. Perhaps it was time to *forget that perfect offering* and *ring the bells that still could ring*. There was hope. I began (again).

CHAPTER 1
BEGINNING THE STORY: INTRODUCTION

> Qualitative researchers are interested in telling, and are often consumed by the need to present their stories of research as an ongoing journey. Their writings must, therefore reflect the process of research—the character and foundational beliefs of the original conceptual framework as well as the evolving one, considerations on the stumblings, in-progress victories, insights and puzzlements of the researcher as the research unfolds, disclosure of the researcher's stance and limitations as well as descriptions of the successes and failures of the ongoing stories of multiple meaning making. So, the process *is* the product. (Ely et al., 1997, p.52)

Introducing the Research

When I read this particular paragraph, I could not help but wonder if the authors knew *me*. As the reader can appreciate from the prologue, my research story includes original and evolving conceptions, doubts and hopes, successes and failures. My initial preoccupation with the ways in which the cracks in the *process* might ruin the *product* for a time obscured in-progress insights. When I accepted the inevitability of imperfection and surrendered to the process, the light got in, illuminating previously unseen meanings in my study. So begins the story of my research process. In this section, I begin to position myself in relation to my research, starting with an explanation of how I came to do this particular study.

My original doctoral proposal was entitled, *A Sociocultural Perspective on ESL Students in Mainstream Classes*. My interest in English as a Second Language (ESL) students began when I conducted my master's thesis research on Native language loss and revival in an Edmonton inner city school Native awareness class. My study emphasized the significance of first language maintenance to students' identity formation. While doing the research, I met students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds and began to note some comparisons between the Native students and those from other language minority backgrounds. As well, much of the reading I was doing during that period pertained to students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. I experienced this literature, which was primarily 'sociocultural' in nature, with a passion that astonished me. I knew, however, that the seed of my interest in minority language learners had been planted long before I ever returned to graduate school, planted by the Native students I taught for years in reserve community schools in British Columbia. My master's thesis research was an attempt to situate my newfound academic learning in an actual educational setting.

When I finished my master's degree, I accepted a teaching position in northern Alberta. At the time I had no intention of doing doctoral work; however, my path eventually wound its way back to the University of Alberta and, in turn, graduate school. The summer before I began my doctoral program, I was employed as a research assistant in the area of second language learning. While conducting a review of the literature, I came across an article (1992) by Kelleen Toohey, "We Teach English as a Second Language to Bilingual Students." When I wrote my master's thesis, her articles on Native language education had been invaluable for my work. In this article, she maintained that the deficit approach to ESL education is all too common-there is a tendency to define ESL students in terms of deficiency. I found myself making comparisons, based on years spent working with Aboriginal students: the generalizations and stereotypes, the focus on performance rather than capability, the likelihood that English would replace, rather than be added to, the first language. I felt angry and frustrated, but at the same time inspired and motivated.

The various strands of this story then came together, and I enrolled in a doctoral program in Language Arts education, intent on making the education of language minority students my focus. I was drawn to this topic because of the similarities to my work in Native language education, as well as to the differences. During my master's program, I had agonized over whether I should, as a non-Native person, conduct research in a First Nations context. While I had reconciled that struggle enough to proceed, the discomfort remained. Although, in many respects, that is where my heart lay, I made a decision not to pursue further studies in the area of Aboriginal languages/education.[1]

I began the program knowing that my research project would, in some way highlight the learning experiences of ESL students. Two factors in particular helped me to refine my focus. During the first term of my doctoral program I was hired to work on a collaborative school-university action research project as a research facilitator to Coalfield School, an urban school often classified as inner city with a large number of ESL students[2]. The project had a double focus: 1) working with partner schools that were attempting to respond to very diverse local communities and student populations, and 2) the preparation of beginning teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. My experience with the project helped me to contextualize some of the literature I was reading at the time. For example, having taught primarily in rural Aboriginal communities, I was initially surprised by the title of Cummins and Cameron's (1994) article, "The ESL IS the Mainstream" and the following excerpt from the Toronto Star: "Large numbers of non-English-speaking children make it impossible for most schools to withdraw students from regular programs to learn English. Try it, and as one board administrator said, it would be like withdrawing three-quarters of the population. Today, Metro teachers have become, by necessity, English-as-a-second-language teachers" (Ainsworth, 1988, B1).

---

[1] This is not to say that the area I had chosen instead was not awkward in similar ways; the challenges of researching *other people's children* (Delpit, 1995) will be problematized throughout the dissertation.

At Coalfield School I was able to see for myself the veracity of these comments. Given the demographic trends, teacher education facilities have not adequately prepared mainstream classroom teachers who are now largely responsible for the education of ESL students. Having found myself to be ill prepared for my first teaching position in an isolated Native community, I strongly identified with this aspect of the project.

It was at this point that Kelleen Toohey made another appearance in my ongoing exploration, in the form of her article, “Learning English as a second language in kindergarten: A community of practice perspective.” I had been introduced to ‘communities of practice’ near the end of my master’s program, through Lave and Wenger’s (1991) book, *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* I had written briefly about communities of practice’ in the last chapter of my thesis, using the concept as a new way to think about ‘common ground’ between the school community and the home community of Native students. Toohey (1996) had used Lave and Wenger’s theoretical framework in an educational context of interest to me–with mainstreamed ESL students. She writes: “Despite the fact that the majority of ESL students in Canadian schools are mainstreamed, …we have little Canadian research that describes in any detailed way the experiences of children who are undergoing integration, or the classes into which they are integrating" (p. 550).

---

[2] All schools mentioned in the dissertation have been given pseudonyms.

Although in a different context, I had long been concerned with the challenges of 'mainstreaming.' My observations of the decreasing success of many of my Native students when they left the community school on the reserve to attend junior high in the public system left me wondering how to best integrate 'non-mainstream' students into mainstream environments. Toohey's study set out to examine how students who began kindergarten not speaking English learned to be participants there, and how the presence of second language learners affected other participants in the school community. I had my dissertation topic–I would explore the integration of ESL students, using a community of practice framework. Toohey's groundbreaking work in the area would serve as a model.

Research Purpose

I agree with Cummins (1996) that

> human relationships are at the heart of schooling. The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any method for teaching literacy, or science or math. (pp. 1-2)

Given that, the purpose of my study was to investigate student-student and student-teacher relationships in a culturally and linguistically diverse junior high classroom, using a 'community of practice' perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991). More specifically, the theoretical intention of my research was to determine what contribution a 'community of practice' framework, which focuses on the situated and social nature of learning, could make to the study of social interaction in a classroom setting. The pedagogical intention was to consider what an ideal community of practice would be for the students in one particular Grade 9 language arts class and to provide direction in making teacher education programs more responsive to issues of cultural and linguistic diversity. The methodological intention was to bring to light some of the challenges associated with conducting classroom research.

Research Questions

Original

Recent studies of ESL have focused on the social contexts in which a second language is learned; in these contexts, the learners' relations with other participants in their community are of importance (Donato, 1994; Haneda, 1997; Kanno & Applebaum, 1995; Toohey, 1996, 1998). With this in mind, my original study was grounded in a theoretical framework based on Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Bain, 1996; Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1987) and Lave and Wenger's concepts of community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (1991). Second language learners are seen as newcomers beginning to participate in the practices of a particular community. Given that the "social structure of the community of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e. for legitimate peripheral participation)" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.98), I wanted to study how ESL students learn to be participants in a classroom community. My intention was to investigate English as a second language learning as the legitimate peripheral participation of newcomers in specific communities, by focusing on the following questions:

1) How do peers and teacher enable/constrain ESL learners in increasing the range of their language participation in the classroom community?
2) How does the social structure of the classroom facilitate/hinder ESL students' access to the mainstream culture while allowing for the maintenance of their 'out-of-school' cultural identities and first languages?
3) What is the role of the teacher in promoting integration among students of all language proficiency levels?

Revised

When I began my research project, I soon realized that there were significant differences between the hypothetical classroom of my proposal and my actual research site. The more time I spent in the classroom, the more I realized that I could not pursue (unchanged) my original questions. The reasons for this will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3. While I could still explore the social structure of the classroom community using sociocultural theory/communities of practice, I needed to revise my research questions so that there was less emphasis on second language learning/learners. Consequently the following revised questions were developed:

1) How do social relations facilitate or constrain participation of classroom members

2) How does the social structure of the classroom community, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for student and teacher learning?

3) What is the role of the teacher in disrupting classroom practices that limit and marginalize students?

Overview of the Dissertation

In the following chapter (Chapter 2), I outline the main theoretical perspectives framing my research. Chapter 3 provides a description of the methodology of the study and an explanation of the ways in which the research plan was "flawed". In Chapter 4, I describe the community of practice and explain how I gradually became aware of the light filtering through the cracks. Community practices in the classroom are illuminated, with an emphasis on social practices, discourse practices and identity practices. Chapter 5 is an examination of what happens when these community practices are disrupted–through group work, by newcomers, and in making preparations for a medieval feast. In the final chapter, I "add up the parts", but as Cohen points out, I still don't "have the sum." I do offer contributions, however imperfect: methodological, theoretical and pedagogical.

CHAPTER 2

FORGET YOUR PERFECT OFFERING: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

> The value of theory is that it allows one to see the previously invisible and to see the previously visible in new ways. The danger of theory is that it can function like a set of blinders, restricting what one sees and how one sees it...Theory, then, is a tool that both supports and constrains research. It provides a perspective on the world, but that perspective can preclude others. (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 26)

Introduction

In their discussion of theoretical frameworks, Ely et al. (1997) suggest that an initial review of literature not be too extensive–rather, the researcher will return to that as well as different literature throughout data collection and during the final writing in order to “talk to the emergent findings” (p. 235). I had many such conversations. I thought I had planned the ‘perfect’ theoretical framework (in theory), only to learn that it was far from perfect (in practice). Given the ‘cracks’ in my research project, I knew my framework needed reshaping. However, I appeared to be having difficulty with the ‘trick.’

> The trick here is to compare where information fits, where it does not, and what is called for in reshaping a theoretical rationale or creating a new one. Too many researchers see the beginning theoretical frame as a structure into which they must shoehorn findings and somehow misplace those that do not make sense in that structure… (Ely et al., 1997, p. 235)

As will be made clear throughout the course of the dissertation, in many respects my findings did not match the literature well. This was due in part to the shift in the focus of my research project, but also to the particular nature of the research site. It was not that I was unwilling to look elsewhere–once the light began to get in the cracks, I was excited to pursue new directions. Initially, though, I was reluctant to let go of a body of literature that I had found compelling. As it turned out, despite the shift in my project, much of the literature that informed my research proposal also spoke to my study findings.

Interested in exploring the social nature of learning, I chose a theoretical framework grounded in sociocultural literature. I had framed, to a considerable degree, my candidacy proposal in terms of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) analysis. However, my literature review had also included an introduction to a sociocultural perspective, as well as sections on Vygotsky, Bakhtin, dialogue and issues of identity and power. These perspectives have endured, although they appear in the dissertation in varied form. The work in my dissertation retains a sociocultural approach, with somewhat less of a focus on second language learning. New sources make their appearance here. The theoretical perspectives I draw on include: Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice and other sociocultural theorists working in the area of situated learning; Vygotskian and Bakhtinian theories on language and learning; and theoretical writing that reflects on identity and identity formation (Gee, 1992, 1999; Eckert, 2000; Hall, 1988; Harklau, 2000; Norton, 1997, 2000; Ryan, 1999). In this chapter I outline these theoretical perspectives and briefly explain how each informs my study.

A Sociocultural Perspective

> Over the last several decades, in and across a wide variety of disciplines, there has been a massive 'social turn' away from a focus on individual behaviour…and individual minds…toward a focus on social and cultural interaction.[1] (Gee, 2000, p. 180)

The theoretical perspective I use in this dissertation is part of the 'social turn' to which Gee refers. A sociocultural approach to mind begins with the assumption that action is mediated and that it cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out (Wertsch, 1991, p. 18). In *Voices of the Mind: A Sociocultural Approach to Mediated Action,* Wertsch (1991) refers to several terms that lay the foundation for a sociocultural framework: action, mediated action, voice, voices and mind. A fundamental belief of a sociocultural approach to mind is that what is to be described and explained is human *action:* "When action is given analytic priority, human beings are viewed as coming into contact with, and creating, their surroundings as well as themselves through the actions in which they engage. Thus action, rather than human beings or the environment considered in isolation, provides the entry point into the analysis" (p. 8). This is based on the assumption that, in trying to understand mental functioning, one cannot begin with the environment or the individual human agent in isolation. As for the modifier *mediated*, Wertsch makes the claim that human action typically employs "mediational means" such as tools and language, and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways (p. 12). The term *voice* is derived from the work of Soviet literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, voice involves much more than an auditory signal, but the more general phenomenon of "the speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (Holquist & Emerson, 1981). In this context, the term *voice* serves as a constant reminder that mental functioning in the individual originates in social, communicative processes. The term *voices* rather than voice is used because Wertsch believes that there are multiple ways of representing reality in approaching a problem. His use of the term *mind* rather than *cognition* reflects a desire to integrate a wide range of psychological phenomena. Finally, Wertsch uses the term *sociocultural* because he wants to understand how mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings.[2] Wertsch's explanation provided an introduction to sociocultural theory, which in turn facilitated my understanding of the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin.

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[1] Gee (2000, pp. 180-183) lists fourteen movements that argue the importance of the 'social'.

Sociocultural theorists from a wide variety of disciplines (for example, developmental psychology, cognitive anthropology, sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, and education) argue that an exclusive focus on individuals is misguided (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1992; Rodby, 1992; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1985). For example, in the field of education, Vygotskian sociocultural theory has explored the situated nature of human learning and cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1987). Similarly, the view that cognition is 'socially shared' or 'socially distributed' rather than being an attribute of individuals has gained currency in educational research (Cobb & Bowers, 1999; Resnick, Levine, & Teasley, 1991; Salomon, 1993). Gutierrez and Larson (1994) propose that sociocultural theories of development provide both a means (the theoretical and analytical tools) and a language for describing human activity across contexts. Because sociocultural theories propose contextualized or situated notions of development, they have become useful in "explaining the importance of creating effective contexts for learning in schools and the important relationship between the nature of the context for learning and what gets learned and how what gets learned is learned" (Gutierrez & Larson, 1994, p. 25).

---

[2] Wertsch (1991) notes that while the term *socio-historical-cultural* would actually be more accurate, it is too cumbersome.

This focus on the social orientation of learning is found in second language research as well; several researchers have emphasised the role of sociocultural context in language teaching and learning (see, for example, McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1997, 2000; Rampton, 1995; Thesen; 1997; Toohey; 2000). Vygotskian-based investigators in second language research have begun to examine the dialogic nature of second language learning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Donato, 1994). Haneda (1997) notes that recent studies of ESL have encouraged investigators to pay particular attention to the importance of the social contexts in which a second language is learned, the learners' relations with other participants, and their different modes of participation (Cumming & Burnaby, 1992; Norton, 1995; Toohey, 1996). Willett (1995) regards ESL learning as the process of becoming a member of a sociocultural group; by engaging in the sociocultural practices of the group, newcomers gradually appropriate the 'languaculture' needed to be considered an insider.[3] Similarly, Rogoff's (1990) view is that it is while participating in social activity that newcomers incorporate the language, skills and perspectives constituting the activity, thereby stretching their concepts and language.

Communities of Practice

> What then of learning? Learning traditionally gets measured on the assumption that it is a possession of individuals that can be found inside their heads. ... learning is not in heads, but in the relations between people (McDermott, 1993, p. 292).

As with the sociocultural literature, looking at the learning process from the community of practice (C of P) perspective brings about two shifts in perspective: "a shift away from the notion of learning as the simple acquisition of knowledge in isolation to the idea of learning as a mode of participation in the social world; and a shift away from the traditional focus on individual learners to an emphasis on their shared membership in the community" (Haneda, 1997, p. 14). In the forward to *Situated Learning*, Hanks notes that Lave and Wenger (1991) locate learning squarely in the processes of co-participation, not in the heads of individuals. They situate learning in certain forms of social co-participation, asking what kinds of social engagements provide contexts for learning to take place.

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[3] *Languaculture* is a term coined by Agar (1994) to help readers keep in mind the theoretical notion that language and culture are inextricably entwined and that to treat them separately distorts both concepts.

In his more recent book, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity,* Wenger (1998) explains that the primary focus for a social theory of learning is on learning as social participation. By participation, Wenger is referring to the process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities (p. 4). A social theory of learning must integrate the components necessary to characterize social participation as a process of learning and of knowing. According to Wenger, these components include: 1) meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability—individually and collectively—to experience our life and the world as meaningful; 2) practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action; 3) community: a way of talking about the social configuration in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognizable as competence; and 4) identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities (p. 5).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that conventional explanations view learning as a process by which a learner internalizes knowledge, whether 'discovered,' 'transmitted' from others, or 'experienced in interaction' with others. In their view,

> this focus on internalization not only leaves the nature of the learner, of the world, and of their relations unexplored, it also establishes a sharp dichotomy between inside and outside, suggesting that knowledge is largely cerebral.

They note that internalization is even central to work on learning explicitly concerned with its social character, citing Vygotsky as an example (this will be discussed further, below). In contrast with learning as internalization, learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world.

It was this notion of social (co)participation that provided the original foundation to my doctoral study, using Lave and Wenger's (1991) concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice as guiding principles. A community of practice is defined as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98). Lave and Wenger explain that their interest in communities of practice was initiated in the study of apprenticeships of various sorts in which it became clear that the practices of the groups were what was learned. Cognitive apprenticeship, therefore, is based on the notion that all significant human activity is highly situated in real-world contexts—it takes as a starting point the cultural and social-practice nature of significant learned experience (Atkinson, 1997). Lave and Wenger analyze many forms of apprenticeship in describing the process of legitimate peripheral participation. By legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), Lave and Wenger mean to draw attention to the point that

> learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practice of a community. 'Legitimate peripheral participation' provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice.[4] (p.29)

As I was moving through the various stages of the PhD program, I found myself situating my learning process as a doctoral student in Lave and Wenger's framework. This enabled me to contextualize and better understand the concepts.

Journal reflection, July 12, 2000

I have begun to think of my own experience in the PhD program as 'legitimate peripheral participation' in that I am 'apprenticing' to become a teacher educator. Like the Vai and Gola tailors of Western Africa (in Lave and Wenger's book) who begin their apprenticeship performing the peripheral tasks of learning to sew by hand and with the treadle sewing machine, at the beginning of the program I was situated on the periphery in terms of my responsibilities in the department. The gap between what I did as a doctoral student and what the professors did was wide. I began to be given tasks beyond the traditional role of student–I worked with a number of professors as a research assistant on various research projects. I came to think of them as 'masters' (or oldtimers), to use Lave and Wenger's terminology. Although I was taking courses at the

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[4] Wenger (1998) allows that communities of practice have been around for a very long time—they existed long before we started to concern ourselves with systematic designs for learning. Communities of practice already exist throughout our societies—inside and across organizations, schools and families—in both realized and unrealized forms.

same time, it was the work experiences that made the doctoral program different for me. The professors I was working with were not formally 'teaching' me (as was the idea in the courses); however, I was 'learning' plenty. I listened, I watched, I asked, I practiced. Gradually, as with the Vai tailors who learned how to sew a garment and then later to cut it out, I was given other teacher-educator responsibilities–supervising student teachers and teaching undergraduate students. Like the Vai tailors. I moved from "peripheral to full participation" in a community of practice.

I began to characterize a significant difference between my experiences as a student in the master's program as compared to the doctoral program: the former was primarily about 'reading and writing' while the latter was about having the opportunity to practice doing what I needed to know to become a teacher educator. In the master's program, I was focused on the content, with which I was, for the most part, quite unfamiliar. In the doctoral program, I paid as much attention to how the professor was teaching as to the content. The process by which I was learning to be a teacher educator resembled, in many respects, LPP. I began to think about learning differently.

Lave and Wenger emphasise that legitimate peripheral participation is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or a teaching technique. Rather, it is an analytical viewpoint on learning that holds not just for situations that clearly operate as apprenticeships, but in all learning situations. The authors, however, make a conscious decision to refrain from any systematic treatment of what their work has to say about schooling. They explain their reasons for doing so. First, issues of learning and schooling have become too deeply interrelated in our culture. Second, the organization of schooling as an educational form is predicated on claims that knowledge is decontextualized, yet schools as places of learning constitute very specific contexts. Third, claims concerning the sources of the effectiveness of schooling stand in contradiction with the situated perspective they have adopted.[5] Lave and Wenger explain that legitimate peripheral participation makes a fundamental distinction between learning and intentional instruction.[6] Having devoted my career to teaching in school settings, this gave me pause for concern. The following quotation fuelled my discomfort.

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[5] See Lave and Wenger (1991, pp. 39-40) for further explanation.

[6] Haneda's (1997) position is that, despite its theoretical appeal, the community of practice perspective is problematic when applied to learning in school settings, in

> Because I am one of those people who felt at home in school and have gone on hanging around schools all my life, I keep catching myself drifting into an insidious equation of learning with education and, more narrowly still, with schooling. Setting out to talk about learning, which pervades all of life, I find myself talking about school, from which most people are happy to be liberated. Yet school casts a shadow on all subsequent learning. Trying to understand learning by studying schooling is rather like trying to understand sexuality by studying bordellos. Certainly schooling is part of the spectrum of learning in human lives, but it is not the model for all learning, only one of many byways. Learning and teaching are both fundamental for human adaptation, but not all human societies segregate them from the flow of life into institutional boxes. (Bateson, 1994, p. 196)

I recognized myself in Bateson's words. As an educational researcher, my intention was to do just that–to attempt to understand learning by studying schooling. For a time, the shadow Bateson suggests school casts on learning fell on the way I felt about my research, reminding me of how limited my perspective was. However, perhaps because I, too, am one of those people who have spent much of my life in schools, I proceeded with my plan to study learning and teaching in the institutional box we call school. I did so, though, with the hope that the theoretical perspectives framing my study would assist me in looking at learning from a different perspective. Lave and Wenger acknowledge that, despite the distinction they make between learning and intentional instruction, learning can take place where there is teaching.

> Undoubtedly, the analytic perspective of legitimate peripheral participation could–we hope that it will–inform educational endeavors by shedding a new light on learning processes, and by drawing attention to key aspects of learning experience that may be overlooked....(W)e are persuaded that rethinking schooling from the perspective afforded by legitimate peripheral participation will turn out to be a fruitful exercise. (pp. 40-41)

And, legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice has informed much educational research. In my literature search, I encountered Lave and Wenger's concepts applied in various school-related contexts: children's literacy learning (Voss, 1996); field experience (Mosenthal, 1996); indigenous education (Stairs, 1994, 1996); language and identity practices (Bucholtz, 1999); second language learning (Flowerdew,

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particular because it does not recognize the significance of the teacher's role. I will address this concern later in the dissertation.

2000; Haneda, 1997; Manyak, 2001; Toohey, 1996, 1998, 2000). It was to the latter, primarily through the work of Kelleen Toohey, that I was particularly drawn.

Like Toohey (1996, 1998, 2000), I had begun my study intending to examine second language learning as the legitimate peripheral participation of newcomers in specific communities. Rather than the perspective familiar in second language research that sees second language learning as the internalization of a body of linguistic knowledge into the brains of individual learners, Toohey (1996) viewed the second language learner as a newcomer beginning to participate in the practices of a particular community (p. 553). As Toohey's study progressed, however, it became clear that conceptualizing second language learning as a process of moving from being an outsider to an insider was too simplistic. Recognizing that participants in any specific community might well have unequal access to particular identities, practices, and community resources, Lave and Wenger note that the "social structure of the community of practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e. for legitimate peripheral participation)" (p. 98). Despite this recognition of various power relations, Toohey (1998) suggests possible difficulties with an analysis of only two sorts of participants: newcomers and old-timers, with newcomers moving towards 'full participation' in communities of practice. These concerns regarding a newcomer/oldtimer dichotomy proved to be particularly significant for my study, albeit in ways other than what I had anticipated.

When the cracks in my research project began to come to light, one of my major concerns was whether I would still be able to use Lave and Wenger's concepts as my basic framework. Not only had Toohey's work provided the foundation to my proposed research, it shaped the way I had come to think about legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice (in relation to second language learners). Could I rethink C of P in a way that would accommodate my actual (as opposed to my proposed) research site? A special issue of *Language in Society*–Communities of Practice in Language and Gender Research–helped me to answer my question. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) explain that "the C of P is one way of focusing on what members do: the practice or activities that indicate that they belong to the group, and the extent to which they belong"

(p. 175). Rather than focusing primarily on the legitimate peripheral participation of second language learners, I began to pay attention to the practices of community members in my research site. This proved to be more productive as the second language learners in my site were, for the most part, not the members positioned on the periphery.

> It might be more helpful to see these students not as marginalized but rather as very much integrated into schools at particular levels and to understand that shifting positions show a great deal about this community. In this way, attention might focus on analyses of what these communities are like and how processes of exclusion and subordination operate locally. From this perspective...the community is highlighted, and questions about how resources are distributed, what identities are accessible there, and so on become of interest. (Toohey, 1999, pp. 135-136)

Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Classroom Discourse

Although the original seed of my doctoral study was Lave and Wenger's theoretical framework, it was necessary for me to understand the origins of their work. This led me to the work of Vygotsky. Lave and Wenger and others working in the study of 'situated cognition' and other schools of constructivism (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Bruner, 1990) owe much to Vygotsky's work, particularly his concepts of 'practical activity' and 'the zone of proximal development' (Stairs, 1996). Wells also draws a connection between Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger, and the latter specifically recognize Vygotsky in their work (1991):

> For Vygotsky, and for those who have extended and developed his ideas, learning is not a separate activity undertaken for its own sake, but an integral aspect of engaging in the ongoing activities of one's community and, in the process, gradually mastering the purposes of those activities and the means by which they are achieved. (Wells, 1999, p. 294)

In my review of the literature, I found that discussions of Vygotsky often included references to Bakhtin. "Like Vygotsky, Bakhtin (1981) believed in the importance of studying action situated in specific sociocultural contexts" (Toohey, 2000, p. 12). In this section I explore the work of psychologist, Lev Vygotsky and literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin and discuss the ways in which their ideas facilitated my making sense of the discourse practices at work in my research site.

Vygotsky and Bakhtin were contemporaries who, although they likely never met, developed concepts and arguments within which a high degree of compatibility is to be found (Daniels, 1993, p. 55). Moraes (1996) suggests that there exists a myriad of similar epistemological assumptions addressed by Vygotsky and Bakhtin: both the Bakhtinian as well as the Vygotskian theories emphasize the crucial role of social factors in one's life; both theories advocate that consciousness is linked to the world of signs; both theories advocate that communication and thinking are dialogical in essence (p.104). Both inform what I had in mind for my research project–studying teacher-student and student-student interaction. Referring to research that seeks to be more specific about the classroom environment and how teacher-student relationships affect learning, Nystrand (1997) notes that

> This new focus on teacher-student and peer interaction has coincided with new conceptions of language and learning, especially viewing language not as a vehicle for the one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to student but rather as a dynamic social and epistemic process of constructing and negotiating knowledge. The work of Russians Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin on discourse as a dialogic, sociocultural process has been seminal in these new conceptions. (xiv)

Nystrand explains that Vygotsky's sociocultural studies explain the central role played by social interaction in conditioning the development of thinking and writing, while Bakhtin's dialogic studies illuminate the semiotic process whereby the meaning of any given instance of discourse is dynamically structured by the interaction of the conversants.

Vygotskian Perspectives

As I familiarized myself with the sociocultural literature, I began to realize how much of this body of knowledge has origins in Vygotsky's work.[7] According to Wertsch (1991), a sociocultural approach to mind takes its basic framework from the writings of Vygotsky. Three basic and interrelated themes run through Vygotsky's writing: 1) a reliance on genetic, or developmental, analysis; 2) the claim that higher mental functioning in the individual derives from social life; and 3) the claim that human action, on both the social and individual planes, is mediated by tools and signs (Wertsh, ibid., p. 19). Although all of these are important (and interconnected), for the purpose of this research, the particular focus will be on the second theme. Vygotsky's claim that higher mental functioning in the individual is rooted in social life was influenced by Marxist theory–in order to understand the individual it is necessary to understand the social relations within which the individual exists. In an attempt to translate Marxist ideas into concrete psychological theory, Vygotsky formulated his general statement about the social origins of individual mental functioning, the 'general genetic law of cultural development' (Wertsch, pp. 25-26).

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[7] Vygotsky's research and writing career spanned only ten years, from 1924 until his untimely death in 1934. The Western world first came to know Vygotsky when his final book, *Thought and Language,* was translated into English and published in 1962. In 1987 it was again translated as *Thinking and Speech,* in order to make the translation true to Vygotsky's original intentions (Dixon-Krauss, 1996).

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 163)

Although Vygotsky's concepts can be applied broadly, it is the educational implications of his work that are particularly relevant to my research project. According to Moll (1990), Vygotsky's primary contribution was in developing a general approach that brought education, as a fundamental human activity, fully into a theory of psychological development (p. 15). Vygotsky regarded education not only as central to cognitive development but as the quintessential sociocultural activity—he considered the capacity to teach and to benefit from instruction a fundamental attribute of human beings (p. 1). Vygotsky stressed the crucial role of more expert members of the culture in providing the guidance and assistance that enables the learner to become an increasingly competent and autonomous participant in the activities in which he or she engages and it was in this context that he formulated the now well-known construct of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) (Wells, 1999, pp. 295-296).

Bruner (1987) explains that the zone of proximal development "serves to give connectedness to a wide range of Vygotsky's thought" (p. 4). As a 'connecting' concept in Vygotskian theory, the zone of proximal development embodies or integrates key elements of the theory: the emphasis on social activity and cultural practice as sources of thinking; the importance of mediation in human psychological functioning; the centrality of pedagogy in development; and the inseparability of the individual from the social. The zone is defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

I had not realized that Vygotsky's zone of proximal development has received "vastly different interpretations, under which the concept of internalization plays different roles" (Lave and Wenger, 1996, pp. 143-144). The authors outline three interpretations. The first is the 'scaffolding' interpretation (defined above). This approach has inspired pedagogical approaches that explicitly provide support for the initial performance of tasks to be later performed without assistance (e.g. Greenfield, 1984) and it is the interpretation with which I was familiar. Second, a 'cultural' interpretation understands the ZPD as the distance between the cultural knowledge provided by the sociohistorical context—usually made accessible through instruction—and the everyday experience of individuals. According to Lave and Wenger, in these two interpretations, the social character of learning mostly consists in a small aura of socialness that provides input for the process of internalization viewed as individualistic acquisition of the cultural given.

Third, the 'collectivist' or 'societal' interpretation stems from contemporary developments in the traditions of Soviet psychology, in which Vygotsky's work figures prominently, for example activity theory (Wertsch, 1985) and critical psychology (Dreier, 1993). Lave and Wenger (1996) tend to agree with the societal interpretations of the concept of the zone of proximal development, extending the study of learning beyond the context of pedagogical structuring. Given my focus on the social contexts of second language learning and teaching, I was particularly interested in their views on internalization. Toohey (2000) notes that in much of the second language instructional literature, "sociality is dismissed, so to speak, as a background to individual internalization", but that "many theorists have criticized the very notion of internalization (Packer, 1993), arguing that it inadequately represents how learners gain from social interaction" (p. 11).

While taking Lave and Wenger's critique into consideration, the scaffolding definition proved to be particularly pertinent for my study, as will be seen in the following chapters. Donato (1994) used the metaphor of scaffolding, derived from cognitive psychology and 1st language (L1) research, in a second language context. In the conclusion to his study, Donato states that second language learners appear quite capable and skillful at providing the type of scaffolded help that is associated in the developmental literature with only the most noticeable forms of expert-novice interaction, such as parent and child (Wertsch, 1979), teacher and student (Wong-Fillmore, 1985), native speakers and non-native speakers (Hatch, 1978) or master and apprentice (Greenfield, 1984). Donato's suggestion that it appears beneficial to consider the learners themselves as a source of knowledge in a social context will be developed in subsequent chapters.

Another Vygotskian-based study that has implications for my research is Antón and DiCamilla's (1998) examination of the social and cognitive functions of L1 use in the collaborative speech of 2nd language (L2) learners. Looking at L1 use within the theoretical framework of Vygotskian psycholinguistics, their qualitative analysis of learners' interaction attempts to demonstrate that L1 is a powerful tool of semiotic mediation between learners (at the interpsychological level) and within individuals (at the intrapsychological level). Interpsychologically, the use of L1 enables learners to work effectively in the ZPD by providing scaffolded help to each other. Intrapsychologically, L1 emerges in collaborative activity in the form of private speech (Vygotsky, 1986) as a cognitive tool in problem resolution (p. 315). The authors conclude that to prohibit the use of L1 in the classroom situations described (in their research) removes two powerful tools for learning: the L1 and effective collaboration (p. 338). From the perspective of sociocultural theory, this study provides insight into the important role of L1 in group activities in the classroom.

Trueba (1989) advocates using a neo-Vygotskian framework that conceptualizes learning as a socially constructed phenomenon to understand the dynamics of academic success for linguistic-minority students. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that central to cognitive development is the cooperation between children and their teachers–or peers who function as teachers. From this perspective, student failure may be seen as a failure of the social system to provide linguistic-minority students with the appropriate social interactions necessary for literacy development.[8] The neo-Vygotskian framework, by focusing on the interpersonal elements of learning, allows us to see the link between individual cognitive processes and the broader sociopolitical structure. Rather than the view that attributes the failure to the linguistic-minority student, this stance places the responsibility for failure to learn on the social system. Similarly, Levine (1993), working with 'ethnic minority children' who are learning English as an additional language in mainstream classes in Britain, notes that what is needed are practices that are Vygotskian in character:

> Instruction aimed at conscious grasp of concepts, knowledge, skills and understanding is in relationship with, and not in opposition to, natural social and intellectual development. It offers teachers a naturalistic methodology which can put achievement within the reach of many *more* working-class pupils. In this sense, the Vygotskian orientation within pedagogy is not only social, it is socialist. (pp. 207-8).

Bakhtinian Perspectives

At this point in the theoretical framework I turn my attention to the work of Bakhtin. At the time I wrote my candidacy proposal, I had only recently been introduced to Bakhtin. Although I did not feel very competent to comment on his work, I felt compelled to include a brief section, as I expected my work to be increasingly influenced by Bakhtin. This has proven to be the case. Wells (1999) suggests that while Vygotsky provides a firm basis for a language-based theory of learning and development that is of central importance for education, what his theory does not provide is explicit guidance on the kinds of language use that would best facilitate this development process in the classroom. According to Wells, in order to translate Vygotsky's theory about the social origin of individual mental functioning into a practice-oriented theory of classroom interaction, we need to adopt a more dynamic approach to language in use by investigating the relationship between discourse and knowing as it occurs in particular, situated activities. Wells sees Bakhtin as making a contribution in this regard.

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[8] While Trueba refers here to literacy development, this could be applied to other types of development as well.

Gee (1996) examines another aspect in which Bakhtin furthers Vygotsky's work: "it is hard…to see how we can give an account of instruction that gets us the good things Vygotsky's account does (conscious awareness and reflective abilities) and still gets us the resources (not just the desire) for critique–gets us meta-knowledge of systems, not just awareness of intrasystem relations" (p. 280). It is here, Gee suggests, that many researchers have turned to Bakhtin.

> His stress on the multiple ways in which any concept, piece of language, discourse, or practice that I internalize–make part of my mental and physical apparatus–is always a heterogeneous mixture of different and often conflicting "voices" connected to different social groups and different histories, different interests and desires, is a light leading in the proper direction. (p. 280).[9]

Bakhtin developed his ideas from a concern for literature, in particular the novel, which he saw as not simply a literary genre, but the epitome of a worldview or cultural framework (Coulter, 1999). In addition to literary studies, Bakhtin's arguments have been extended to studies in film, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, feminist and queer theory, as well as works on fine art, architecture and social geography (Vice, 1997). The work of Bakhtin has inspired much classroom research, as well.[10] Most of these studies focus on Bakhtin's fundamental ideas of *dialogism* and *heteroglossia.* Dialogism, Bakhtin's central concept, "refers to the ceaselessly shifting power relations between words, their sensitivity to each other, and the relativizing force of their historically motivated clashes and temporary resolutions", while heteroglossia is the "concept of the many 'different languages' which make up social life that underlies all Bakhtin's other concepts" (Vice, 1997, p. 5). Rockwell (2000) explains that

> these tools have allowed researchers to explore the nexus between the situated meaning of utterance and meanings drawn from multiple previous and parallel utterances, to reflect on the many voices present in the classroom, both in exchanges among participants and within the discourse of each participant. (p. 260)

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[9] Needless to say, I am drawn to the *light.*

[10] For works that use Bakhtin's ideas in studying classrooms, see for example Hicks, 1996; Kozulin, 1996; Lemke, 1990; Maybin, 1994; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996; Toohey, Waterstone & Jule-Lemke, 2000; Wertsch, 1991.

Bakhtin's ideas are often grouped under the umbrella of dialogism because of his overriding concern with dialogue. Bakhtin thought of dialogicity in a broader context than is usually associated with the term 'dialogue' in contemporary social science; in general, it concerns the various ways in which two or more voices come into contact (Wertsch and Smolka, 1993). Bakhtin rejects the Saussurean division of language into *langue* (the linguistic system) and *parole* (the individual speech act), and especially the view that individual utterances are composed from units of language without regard to context (Coulter, 1999, pp. 5-6). For Bakhtin, an utterance, or individual speech act, presupposes a response from an 'other' and meaning is made between partners in dialogue. Nystrand (1997) explains this accordingly: "Bakhtin believed that the meaning we give to an individual utterance always emerges in our response to and anticipation of other utterances; utterances relate to each other in much the way that questions and answers reciprocally reflect each other"(p. 10).

Toohey (2000) considers Bakhtin's work on dialogism to be informative with respect to the investigation of the appropriation of classroom language. She explains that "language events are thus joint productions: speakers construct their utterances on the basis of their interactions with listeners, both in actual and assumed communities. The interlocutors' social positions matter, as do previous and future speakers' and hearers' positions; hence, 'finding a place' in the chain of speech communication is difficult and complex" (p. 13). Bakhtin spoke of the struggle for ownership of language:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language, but rather exists in other people's mouths, in other people's concrete contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (1981, pp. 293-94)

That the word "is half someone else's" and "exists in other people's mouths" has been made all too clear to me in this literature review. At this point in the dissertation, it remains to be seen whether I will succeed in appropriating these words and making them my own.

Although there are fewer references to second language research drawing on Bakhtinian perspectives than on those of Vygotsky, I have found some pertinent to my study. Moraes (1996) draws upon the epistemological assumptions of Bakhtin to analyze bilingual education.[11] In contrast to Saussurean notions of language that do not give consideration to the fact that both language and social contexts shape people's identity, the Bakhtin circle emphasizes social and cultural interrelations as crucial factors in the analysis of language.[12] In Moraes' (1996) view, the main aspect addressed by Bakhtin and his scholarly colleagues regarding the analysis of language concerns the relevance of the dialogical character of language. Language flows within social exchange–an exchange of consciousness that establishes the dialogical relationship between the speaker and the listener (who is another speaker). This view of dialogue considers the social location that constructs the self and the other; the existence of the self and the other is a dialogical existence.

The Bakhtinian notion of language embraces the idea that the other should not be silenced or excluded. Within this assumption, nonstandard speakers, for instance, contribute to maintaining the dialogical existence of language. Moraes contrasts this to the standard language used in schools, which places individuals in hierarchical positions. In other words, the languages that many students bring to the classroom are omitted within the teaching-learning process since the standard/monologic discourse of the school assumes an evaluation of which languages are appropriate and which languages must be marginalized (pp. 94-95). Unfortunately, having done my master's thesis on Native language loss, I am all too familiar with this perspective and the resultant consequences. So, I find hope in Quantz and O'Connor's (1988) suggestion that Bakhtin offers us a framework for examining cultural continuity and change: "the concept of dialogue as a multivoiced social activity explains how the ideas of the powerful gain and maintain legitimacy as well as how the disempowered can attempt to legitimate their ideas and beliefs to others" (p. 99).

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[11] Moraes' book refers to the debate surrounding bilingual education in the United States. Although there are differences to my research context, I find her book helpful, in particular the chapter, "Language and its Multiple Voices."

[12] The principal members of the Bakhtin circle were Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Medvedev, and Pumpianskij. Members shared assumptions that social interaction constructs meanings and that language both represents and masks ideologies (Moraes, 1996).

One aspect of Bakhtin's work which has been of considerable influence in this work is the concept of carnival. Carnival is based on the historical carnivals of the Middle Ages, which Bakhtin considered to have survived in certain types of writing: the disruptive, profane, grotesquely realistic (Vice, 1997).

> Bakhtin was interested in medieval carnivals, which he saw as offering temporary release from the official social order and a disruption of usual routines. He thought that such a release and suspension of repression could enable free and full participation on the part of those who were customarily lower in social status. (Toohey, Waterstone, & Jule-Lemke, 2000, p. 431)

As with dialogism and heteroglossia, it is the educational implications of carnival that most interest me. I found several studies that illustrate how carnival enables educators to envision and implement innovative classroom practices. Lensmire (1994, 2000) uses the lessons of Bakhtin's carnival to critically examine the writing workshop, portraying writing workshops as a form of carnival. Young (1998) offers an interpretive analysis of adolescent text-based discussions based on the metaphor, discussion as a practice of carnival. Toohey, Waterstone, and Jule-Lemke (2000) use Bakhtin's notion of carnival in their discussion of how social relations in a Punjabi Sikh classroom facilitate or constrain the participation of classroom members. And, working with native Spanish-speaking students in a primary grade immersion class, Manyak (2001) considers the construction, maintenance, and consequences of the Daily News as a carnivaleseque literacy practice. Each of these studies provided me with insight as to how I could apply Bakhtin's notion of carnival to theorize a significant incident that occurred during my research project.

Wells (1999) suggests that what emerges from looking at the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin is a view of the relationship between language and knowing that is more complex than the one that has generally been taken for granted in education, and by implication the way that classroom discourse is understood:

> ...ideas do not exist independently of the semiotic processes through which they are formulated and communicated for particular purposes on

> particular occasions; furthermore, since communication is a dialogic process, the meanings that are made by speakers and listeners or writers and readers with respect to individual utterances are strongly influenced by the discourse context in which they occur. Knowing, then, is both situated and dialogic. (p. 106)

Classroom Discourse

One of the aspects of learning in social contexts I had intended to explore in my research was that of talk or dialogue. What I had envisioned happening in my research site resembled Britton's (1969) notion of 'talking to learn,' which would include engaged discussion, substantive teacher-student interaction, and peer-group work as essential parts of any classroom context. Vygotskian and Bakhtinian perspectives would contribute to this inquiry. Yeoman (1996), for example, uses a Bakhtinian/Vygotskian theory of language to examine the nature of dialogue in second language teaching. She explains that Bakhtin and Vygotsky both "saw language not as something that could be defined and measured, but as endlessly developing and meaningful only in the context of dialogue. In this sense, it is through language and through continuous dialogue with our inner selves and with others that we experience the world (and) become members of a community" (p. 597).

> ...because the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin was grounded in queries of how language used socially both mediates and constitutes the thinking self, discourse has become a fulcrum for much of the current scholarly inquiry into the social dimensions of knowledge construction. (Hicks, 1996, pp. 2-3)

While my interest in 'talking in class' remains, my inquiry did not turn out as anticipated. This was one of the areas that necessitated a return to the literature in order to make sense of my data. In the course of my readings I came across a body of related literature–classroom discourse–that appears to better address what transpired in my research site. While acknowledging that the term discourse is used in varying ways,[13] for my purposes here I will use Hicks' (1996) definition of discourse as "language used socially" (p. 5). Hicks explains that while languages can be described as abstract grammatical systems, language used socially, or discourse, is also laden with the values, beliefs, and intentions of its users. Similarly, Gee (1999) defines 'discourse' as language-in-use and Fiske (1996) as language in social use.

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[13] Lemke (1995) notes that *discourse* is a protean concept; it can refer to the general notion that we communicate with language and other symbolic systems, or to particular kinds of things we say (e.g. the discourse of linguistics).

Hicks (1996, p. 2) outlines three theoretical and pedagogical strands of inquiry that have been central to the current studies of how discourse mediates learning in social context. The first is what might be loosely termed sociocognitive theories of learning, studies of what Gee (1992) calls the "social mind." The second strand is that of sociocultural studies of language and literacy, which examine oral and written language in particular social contexts. The third domain is studies of classroom discourse, what Cazden (1988) has termed "the language of teaching and learning." These strands have, in complementary ways, facilitated my examination of the role that discourse played in my research site.

Cazden (1988) describes the study of classroom discourse as a kind of applied linguistics—the study of situated language use in one social setting. Three features of classroom life comprise the tripartite core of all categorizations of language functions: the language of curriculum, the language of control, and the language of personal identity. Of particular interest to my study is what Cazden terms the default pattern of classroom discourse–Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE)–doing what comes naturally, at least to teachers. The IRE sequence (Mehan, 1979) is considered the traditional pattern of teacher and student interaction.[14] Erickson (1996) has summed up this structure as a "known-information question initiated by the teacher, followed by a response by a student, followed in turn by evaluation of the response by the teacher"(p. 31). In his review of the literature, Nystrand (1997) found that studies that have focused particularly on the role of classroom discourse in learning have renewed criticism of recitation as the persistent, dominant mode of instruction. My own post-research literature search has resulted in similar findings. I mention this (post-research) because of two related points concerning the IRE sequence that proved to be of significance to my study: 1) I was unfamiliar with the classroom discourse literature regarding IRE sequences; and 2) the pattern of classroom discourse for teachers described as the "default" pattern (Cazden, 1988) did not appear to come naturally for the teacher in my research study. This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

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[14] IRE is also termed recitation sequence, triadic dialogue or IRF–in IRF, the F means Feedback or Follow-Up, Wells, 1993.

Hicks (1996) suggests that what has happened since the publication of this research on language in classroom settings is that both classroom teachers in their practice and educational researchers in their analyses have begun to deviate from this norm. Some teachers have constructed participant frameworks that do not conform to the teacher-directed IRE. In these non-IRE discussion formats, teachers' revoicings of students' comments are nonevaluative and nonfinal.

Bakhtin's theories offer a valuable departure from conventional thinking about voice and suggest a theoretical framework well suited to examining classroom discourse as described by Hicks (Knoeller, 1998). A case in point is Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson's (1995) study. The authors use Bakhtin's (1981) notions of dialogic meaning and social heteroglossia to help illustrate how the classroom is inherently multi-voiced. [15] They examine how power is locally constituted through the various configurations of talk and interaction in the classroom. The authors' position is that while members of the classroom community hold varied expertise in the form of local knowledge, the inscribed knowledge of the teacher and classroom regularly displaces the local and culturally varied knowledge of the students. This displacement of student knowledge creates the space for student counterscripts to develop, revealing the inherently multi-voiced and dialogic nature of the classroom. Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson consider that, in the face of a rigidly monologic teacher script, the students' counterscripts have little influence on the teacher's script. Rather, "the only space where a true interaction or communication between teacher and student can occur in this classroom is in the middle ground, or 'third space', in which a Bakhtinian social heteroglossia is possible" (p. 447). When a true dialogue occurs between students and teachers, a new, transitional space is created–within this third space, actual merging of the teacher and student worldviews occurs (p. 452).

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[15] Fairclough (1992) explains that social heteroglossia, or the inherently intertextual and interdiscursive nature of social interaction, is not only a feature of novelistic writing, but also a feature of the world.

I approached my research very excited about the possibility of looking for instances of 'dialogue in the third space.' The authors present the notion of the 'third space' as a framework for redefining what counts as effective classroom practice.

> Effective practice, in this sense, exists in contexts in which various cultures, discourses, and knowledges are made available to all classroom participants, and thus become resources for mediating learning. It is within this third space that students and teachers can bridge the various social spaces within classrooms. (p. 467)

Not surprisingly, what counted as effective classroom practice looked 'different' in my site. This may be in part due to the different cultural composition of student bodies; the majority of the students in Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson's study were of African American and Latino descent, whereas Asian students were prominent in my study. Nonetheless, the need for some form of 'middle ground' or 'third space' also emerged in my study, although the shape was much changed.

Socially Situated Identities

> (I)dentities emerge in practice, through the combined effects of structure and agency. Individuals engage in multiple identity practices simultaneously, and they are able to move from one identity to another. (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 209)

The last section of the literature review mentions the growing interest among L2 educators in the negotiated, constructed and conflicted nature of identity (Norton, 1997) and extends the discussion to consider the somewhat more general concept of 'socially situated identity.' The central argument of Norton's (2000) book is that second language acquisition (SLA) theorists have struggled to conceptualize the relationship between the language learner and the social world because they have not developed a comprehensive theory of identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context (p. 4).[16] She argues that SLA theory needs to develop a conception of identity that is understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in social interaction. In taking this position, she foregrounds the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity (p. 5). Drawing on Heller (1987), Norton explains that

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[16] Norton (2000, p. 5) uses the term *identity* to refer to how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future.

> it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person gains access to–or is denied access to–powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. Thus language is not conceived of as a neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning. (p. 5)

Norton (2000) notes that interest in language and identity has been growing in momentum. I had been fascinated by the special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* on language and identity (Norton, 1997). Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997), for example, explore questions of identity and language within the context of multilingual urban classrooms in England. They draw on biographical data from adolescent bilingual and multilingual learners, making the point that a disjuncture exists between the experiences of the learners and the linguistic and ethnic categories imposed upon them. Because language use and notions of ethnicity and social identity are interconnected, they suggest that educators need to attend to the *actual* rather than the *presumed* language use, ethnicity, and identity of the bilingual learner. Identity here is presented as complex, contradictory and dynamic. Drawing on Hall (1988), Leung, Harris and Rampton note that

> ...members of minority groups are not simple inheritors of fixed identities, ethnicities, cultures, and languages but are instead engaged in a continual collective and individual process of making, remaking, and negotiating these elements, thereby constantly constructing dynamic new ethnicities. (p. 547)

They offer an alternative account of the classroom realities in contemporary multilingual schools where the linguistic profiles and language learning needs of ESL students are not easily understood in terms of fixed concepts of ethnicity, identity and language. I was particularly drawn to their article because the context to which Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997) refer had many parallels to my research site.[17] When I had to face the cracks in my study, I realized that I had *presumed* much about the prospective research participants. While I had taken this literature into consideration in my proposal, I had imagined language learners that would fit into my theoretical framework. Clearly, rather than attempting to 'shoehorn findings' into my hypothetical structure, reshaping was in order.

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[17] The similarities will be outlined in the Chapter 4.

Nevertheless, I understood that students learning a second language are socially situated and negotiate multiple, dynamic and often contradictory identities (McKay and Wong, 1996). Referring to the adolescent Chinese-speaking immigrant students with whom they worked, the authors make the point that "contrary to the kind of generic 'stick figure' of the learner painted in much literature on second language learning and many teacher training programs, learners are extremely complex social beings with a multitude of fluctuating, at times conflicting, needs and desires" (p. 603). I found myself identifying with McKay and Wong's description of the ESL learner—I was, however, remembering the stick figure of the 'silent' Native student portrayed in the literature. I recall when I first started graduate school how I would try to locate the dynamic, complex students I had taught in the literature I was reading. It was difficult, until I thought about what happened to those same students when they left the community school on the reserve to attend junior high in town–in that context, all too often my students became those 'silent' Native student I read about in the research articles. This emphasized for me how identity is socially situated and the ways in which identity influences learning.

Harklau's (2000) study of the ways in which ESL students' identities were constructed in different educational institutions (in this case, high school and community college) highlights the finding that learners' identities affect their experience in school. Harklau notes that this finding is consistent with the work of other researchers who have increasingly called on the construct of learner identity to understand classroom learning (see McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1997, 1995; Rampton, 1995; Thesen; 1997; Toohey; 2000). Harklau draws on the notion of representation to understand how seemingly self-evident and unchanging identities emerge in a particular social context out of ever-evolving processes of identity (re)creation" (p. 35).[18] These studies informed mine in various ways, and reminded me that the construct of learner identity and the notion of representation were helpful in making sense of the learning experiences of all the research participants, not only those positioned as second language learners.

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[18] Harklau (2000) uses representation to refer to the images, archetypes, or even stereotypes of identity with which students are labeled.

In this regard, James Paul Gee's writings (1990, 1992, 1999) on Discourse(s) have helped me to situate this aspect of my study in a broader context. Gee (1999) distinguishes between 'discourse' with a 'little d' and 'Discourse' with a 'big D.' As mentioned earlier in the section on classroom discourse, Gee uses 'discourse' with a 'little d' when he is talking about 'language-in-use'–how language is used 'on site' to enact activities and identities. He explains that "when 'little d' (language-in-use) is melded integrally with non-language 'stuff' to enact specific identities and activities, then…'big D' Discourses are involved" (p. 7). Lemke (1995) describes Gee's double view of discourse accordingly: "discourse as what we are actually saying (and doing), and Discourses (capitalized) as our social habits of different people saying (and doing) the same sorts of things in the same ways time and again" (p. 16). Gee (1990) defines Discourse as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network,' or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'" (p. 143).

As I read Gee's work on Discourse(s) ('ways of being in the world'), I was struck by the similarities to Lave and Wenger's 'communities of practice.' Gee (1999) explains that the term he refers to as 'Discourse' is meant to cover important aspects of what others have called: communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991); discourses (Foucault, 1979, 1985); cultural communities (Clark, 1996); discourse communities (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Miller, 1984); practices (Barton & Hamilton; 1998; Bourdieu, 1979/1984); cultures (Geertz, 1973); activity systems (Engestrom, 1987, 1990; Wertsch, 1998).[19]

It was Gee's discussion, in particular, of identity that I found helpful in a way that extended Lave and Wenger's communities of practice. Gee (1999) uses the term 'identity' (or, more specifically, 'socially-situated identity') for the multiples identities we take on in different practices and contexts, using the term 'core identity' for the continuous and relatively 'fixed' sense of self underlying our contextually shifting multiple identities. [20] Lemke (1995) explains that Gee's (1990) view sees (D)iscourses as 'identity kits' that people adopt and that "operate in communities to get some people more of the 'goods' they value than other people get" (p. 12).

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[19] See Gee (1999, p. 38) for a complete list of references.

> Gee (1990) observes that people from some social groups more readily master these forms[21] and are prepared by their whole lives to feel comfortable with them, to operate with them more intuitively than others do. .....Discourses do not just function ideologically as identity kits or to obtain 'goods'. They also function to legitimate, naturalize or disguise the inequities they sustain. (p. 13)

Gee's work on identity has considerable applicability to the research participants in my study and will be further developed in Chapter 4, in relation to a discussion of 'cultural capital' (Apple, 1979; Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

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[20] Gee (1999, p. 39) notes that some people dislike the term 'situated identity', preferring something like social position or subjectivity (and leaving 'identity' for a sense of self that is relatively continuous and 'fixed' over time).

[21] Lemke is referring to certain discourse 'forms' (for example, knowing how to write academic essays).

CHAPTER 3
THERE IS A CRACK IN EVERYTHING: METHODOLOGY

> Learning is the fundamental pattern of human adaptation, but mostly it occurs before or after or in the interstices of schooling. Preoccupied with schooling, most research on human learning is focused on learning that depends on teaching or is completed in a specified context rather than on the learning that takes place spontaneously because it fits directly into life. (Bateson, 1994, p. 197)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained my decision to proceed with my plan to study learning and teaching in the *institutional box* we call school, despite acknowledging that most learning happens in contexts other than school. In the process, I learned a great deal. I managed to bring to light many findings of significance concealed in the interstices of my research site. While my research was completed in a specified context, much of what I learned did not depend directly on teaching. Rather, consistent with my theoretical framework, the focus of my research was on the social contexts of schooling and the social nature of learning. In this chapter I outline the research design, provide the methodological details of the study, discuss ethical considerations and identify what I consider to be the limitations of the study.

Nature of the Study

> The term research design is somewhat confusing. Social science methodologists have failed to make clear and definitive distinctions among research designs or to clearly discriminate among theoretical frames, research designs, and data collection methods. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 30)

Having taken graduate research courses in qualitative research, ethnography, action research, and narrative research, I can relate to the authors' description of confusion. As my research has been influenced by various traditions, including action and narrative research, I am reluctant to label my research design. Yet, I know that there is an expectation for me to do so. Given that, my study is qualitative in nature and can best be described as an ethnographic case study. In a qualitative approach to research the paramount objective is to understand the *meaning* of an experience—how all the parts work together to form a whole (Merriam, 1988). Such an outlook to research is particularly appropriate for my inquiry into how classroom members work together (or do not) in a community of practice. Case study is defined as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. xi). I chose case study design because it is compatible with what I hoped to accomplish during my research–that is, to gain a greater insight into the student-student and student-teacher interaction in a single junior high language arts classroom.

Based on the direct study of human beings in interaction, "ethnography claims that knowledge, while always tenuous, is best established by doing fieldwork, that is, research with people in natural settings" (Haig-Brown, 1992, p. 101). Defined as "the study of people's behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior" (Watson-Grego, 1988, p. 576), ethnography was an appropriate choice for the type of case study I wanted to conduct–an examination of social interaction in a classroom setting. Eckert (1989) makes the point that "the flourishing field of classroom ethnography indicates that educators have begun to take seriously the social interaction in the classroom as part of the educational process" (p. 179). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 3) describe ethnography as both product (the reconstruction of a cultural group) and process (a way of studying human life), and outline four principles of ethnographic design: ethnographic strategies elicit phenomenological data; ethnographic research studies are empirical and naturalistic; ethnographic research is holistic; and ethnographic researchers use a variety of research techniques to amass their data.

At the same time, the authors note that ethnography in educational research has received much criticism and that studies purporting to be educational ethnographies vary widely in focus, scope and methods of execution. Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) discuss some of the reasons for the current popular and powerful critique of ethnography: in a world where knowledge is socially constructed, empirical methods have only marginal epistemological status; it is difficult to separate the ethnographer's personal and professional vision; ethnographic accounts are inevitably inaccurate and constructed; as no form of research is ever politically neutral, the only ethical form of ethnography is critical ethnography. While taking these critiques seriously, the authors believe "that approaches to research that characterize the rich complexity and particularity of human experience deserve all the exposure they can get especially in a world where reigning scientific approaches typically accomplish their goals at the direct expense of such knowledge" (p. 65). The particular ways in which I experienced the imperfections of ethnographic research will be problematized over the course of the dissertation.

Researcher Stance

> ...as researchers our stances, our angles of repose, do affect what we are interested in, the questions we ask, the foci of our study, and the methods of collection as well as the substance of analysis. And the meanings we make from our research projects are filtered through our beliefs, attitudes, and previous experiences as well as through both the formal and informal theoretical positions we understand or believe in. (Ely et al., 1997, p. 38)

As I approached the research, I revisited readings I had done during my master's degree, among them *Entering the Circle* (Packer & Addison, 1989) and *Orientalism* (Said, 1979) in which the authors discuss the "scientific attitude" and research that is supposed to be "nonpolitical, that is, scholarly, academic, and impartial." Packer and Addison's view is that "being value-neutral, free from prejudice, objective and unbiased (to the small extent that it is possible at all) involves adopting a special posture of distance or denial of one's personal interests and concerns" (p. 27). Similarly, Said makes the point that "no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society" (pp. 9-10). I had no desire that my research would be considered impartial or nonpolitical. Rather, "qualitative case study is highly personal research" and "researchers are encouraged to include their own personal perspectives in the interpretation" (Stake, 1995, p. 135).

While this approach suits the way I prefer to work, at the same time it reminds me to be attentive to my own biases, since all observations and analyses will be filtered through the researcher's worldview, values, and perceptions (Merriam, 1988, p. 39). Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 148) suggest that "the best cure for biases is to be aware of how they slant and shape what we hear, how they interface with our reproduction of the speaker's reality, and how they transfigure truth into falsity." Not only did I approach the study cognizant of the need to be aware of my biases, I thought I knew what they were. I was amazed at the degree to which my stance affected certain aspects of my study, sometimes without my awareness. I will explain the particulars in more detail in the following chapters as appropriate. Similarly, "the actual conduct of research and success in the field can be affected by myriad factors, including age, gender, status, ethnic background, overidentification, rejection, factionalism, bureaucratic obstacles, accidents, and good fortune" (Punch, 1994, p. 165). Indeed, a number of these factors affected my research, in particular ethnic background, gender, and status. Questions of ethnicity, gender and class were especially significant in my study. As will become apparent, my position as a white middle class woman and my status as a researcher affected my research in various ways.

Sarason (1971) speaks of the need to understand the persons being studied from the perspective of their own situation rather than judgmentally from afar, thus reminding us that every research stance constitutes the taking up of a particular perspective, from which some things, and not others, can be seen. I attempted to present the perspectives of research participants from their own positions, knowing that the way I was positioned limited what I was able to see. For example, as a teacher researcher, Gallas (1998) explains that she can see and hear things that are not available to researchers who collect data in other people's classrooms on designated days and for limited periods of time. At the same time, as a researcher, I saw and heard things from my vantage point that were not available to the teacher. In keeping with my theoretical framework and, like Toohey (1996), I began to think of my role as a researcher doing fieldwork in terms of legitimate peripheral participation (outlined in Chapter 2).

> Conceptualizing the position of ethnographic researcher as one of legitimate peripheral participation and recognizing that what one is able to do in a setting constrains importantly what one is able to know, is perhaps helpful in making clear the ways in which researcher accounts may be regarded by other participants as rich, powerful and insightful and/or limited, unsatisfying and incorrect. (Toohey, 1996, p. 555)

Methodological Details

Gaining Access

> People doing research engage in a process called gaining access. For me, *gaining access* conjures up a vision of breaking down a gate or coming in with a search warrant. I prefer to think of the start of research in which I participate as beginning a relationship. (Haig-Brown, 1992, p. 97)

The issue of 'gaining access' did cause me some anxiety. Although I had designed my study with a particular school in mind (Coalfield School), this was dependent on school board approval. The reasons for my interest in Coalfield School were threefold: 1) it has a culturally and linguistically diverse student population and a significant number of ESL students; 2) having been a research facilitator to the Coalfield School for an action research project, I was familiar with the school; and 3) the principal of the school had expressed an interest in and supported my research project. Although getting through the approval process did seem at times like breaking down, or struggling around, a gate, overall I preferred to think of my research in terms of beginning a relationship. That I had begun tentative relationships at Coalfield School and that the principal, Ruth Patnorev, was keen to have me do my research there, were factors I considered to be important. In retrospect, given the theoretical framework I intended to use, perhaps there were other factors to which I should have paid more attention.

I did receive permission to conduct my research at Coalfield School, but not as soon as I had hoped. My proposal was written, the candidacy exam passed, the ethics review approved, and summer was over. My intention was to be in the classroom from the beginning of September so I could examine 'community building'. Unfortunately, I did not receive permission to proceed until mid-October. At this time, the principal of the school forwarded me the name/email address of a junior high teacher (Emily Carstairs) at the school who was interested in my project. Ruth had mentioned my project to the teachers at the year-end staff meeting and again after the school board had approved my project. Although I knew several members of Coalfield staff from my previous involvement at the school two years earlier, I had not met Emily as this was her second year at the school. I contacted her and we set a date to meet at lunchtime to discuss the project.

Research Site

My research was conducted in a Grade 9 language arts classroom at Coalfield School, a public elementary/junior high school northwest of the downtown core of an urban setting in western Canada. Built in the early 1900s, Coalfield is one of the oldest schools in the city, predating most of the other buildings and homes in the area. Over the years the school population has undergone many changes; once a middle-class neighbourhood, the school now serves many immigrant and low-income families. The school is considered an inner-city school, and is situated in the lowest socio-economic area of the city. At the beginning of the school year, 224 students were enrolled in the school; by the end of year enrollment had dropped to about 210 students. At the time of the study, approximately 45% of the students were of Cambodian heritage, while another 30% were Chinese and Vietnamese. First Nations students comprised an additional 15% of the student community.

School staff members were working on various initiatives to improve relations between the different cultural groups in the school. It was in this context that I had been involved with the school. I had been hired as a research assistant for the action research project, a school-university collaborative project concerned with the effects of the changing demographics on schools and teaching. My role in the project was as research facilitator to Coalfield School, one of three partner schools participating in the project. In the fall of 1997, the school offered a new junior high options course, the Multicultural Leadership class, designed in response to tensions that seemed to exist between various ethno-cultural groups in the neighbourhood. I spent the year as a participant observer in this new class. As part of the collaborative venture between the university and the partner schools, the class took part in the making of a video related to issues of culture and teaching. One of my roles as research facilitator was to interview students as well as the co-teachers and two student teachers who were participating in the course. As the Multicultural Leadership class had never been offered before, the principal expressed an interest in comparing students' perceptions of the course to the teachers' perceptions; feedback could prove helpful in offering suggestions for future courses. During the course of the interviews, the topic of ESL surfaced as particularly compelling. I used selected data collected to write a paper for a curriculum course on ESL students' experiences. This information then informed my candidacy proposal, in the form of a pilot study. Further details about the classroom and study participants will be provided in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

Although case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis, one of the major strengths of case study research is the opportunity to use multiple methods of data collection (Merriam, 1988). I used a variety of data collection approaches, including participant observation of classroom student-teacher and student-student interaction, contextual field notes, teacher and classroom documents, samples of student writing, newspaper articles about the school, and transcripts from audio-taped semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. A brief description of each of the data sources follows.

Participant Observation

> Practice links the greatest virtuoso with the child beginning piano lessons and refutes the notion of learning as a one-way transfer of useful knowledge, a replacement of the unknown with the known. Communities of practice blur the line between aspirants and adepts because both are still developing. To attend even when attending means sitting on the sidelines, like a medical student watching a surgical procedure is to become a participant. (Bateson, 1994, p. 115)

I began my research in the community of practice very much on the sidelines–as a participant observer. Although I was familiar with the position of participant observer from previous research experiences, I initially struggled with the role in my dissertation project. Spradley (1980, pp. 58-62) ranks types of participant observation on a continuum of involvement from nonparticipation to complete participation. I began the project desiring a high level of participation. There were reasons for this. I had just finished teaching an English language arts methods course to student teachers preparing for their field experience. The approach to the course encouraged participatory learning and class discussions; a part of me was eager to try out what I had been teaching the student teachers in a 'real' classroom context. Adding to this, as part of a course on narrative research, I had read a dissertation about a multicultural literature study conducted in high school English classes. The researcher and the teacher of these classes had engaged in collaborative research and did some team teaching, sharing animated literature discussions with the students.

However unrealistic, I had imagined a comparable degree of involvement when I began my research. During a discussion early into the research, one of my supervisors cautioned me against this, reminding me that I was in the classroom as a researcher, and that my primary role was to observe. I realized that I needed to be clear about the distinction between my identity as teacher and my identity as researcher. This proved to be an ongoing challenge for me throughout the course of the study; however, I was assisted in my determination to keep my teacher and researcher roles separate by two factors. First, Emily considered my role to be that of researcher, and second, I did not have to work hard at keeping a low profile in the class. This was a Grade 9 class, and for the most part, the students in this class were particularly reticent–on the whole, they ignored me for some time.

Participant observation provided me with a working knowledge of the classroom organization, peer and student-teacher interactions, and social relations. In turn, this helped me to clarify what I would later focus on in the interviews. It also gave me the chance for the students to become familiar with me gradually. I began visiting the Language Arts class (which was first period daily), as a participant observer at the beginning of November and continued my visits until final exams began in June. My visitation schedule was dependent on a variety of factors, including my and the classroom agenda (e.g. exams, field trips, assemblies, teacher absence, school holidays). In general, I visited the classroom on a twice-weekly basis. However, this varied. There were times when the students were in the middle of working on something that I wanted to see the continuation of and I would attend the class several days in a row. There were times when I was unable to visit, due to other commitments. After spring break, when I began interviewing students, I visited the school more frequently. Classroom visits continued whenever possible during the time I was interviewing students, and continued after interviews were completed. In addition to spending time in the Language Arts classroom, I also observed in the Grade 9 science class, the Multicultural Leadership class and the ESL class (both taught by the school community coordinator). When the students went to the library, had a guest speaker or an assembly, I joined them. I also attended special school events, such as the ceremony in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in addition to spending time on the schoolground and walking around the neighbourhood.

In the early days of my observations, I sat at the back of the classroom and wrote field notes. When the class was doing seatwork, I sometimes walked around and talked to the students as they worked. When they left the class to work in the library (where the computers were), I would follow, once again asking students questions as they worked. Whenever possible, Emily and I would manage a few moments of conversation, either before, during, or after class—to clarify information, ask permission for something, explain what I had noticed, or discuss particular students or lessons. During the course of the year, there were three student teachers in the class. Two were students from the nearby university doing their 4 week introductory professional term field experience, and the third was a student from the University of Toronto completing a final 6 week field experience. I had several conversations with the student teachers at the school; in addition, I met two student teachers after they completed their practicum experience in the school.

After Christmas, the structure of the class changed quite a bit as the students were working on group projects and oral speeches, so I had more opportunities to observe social interaction. It was easier for me to have limited contact with the students. By the end of the year, I felt that my position in the classroom had changed somewhat; although I was still positioned on the periphery of the community of practice, the degree of my involvement had increased. Part of this was due to the amount of time I had spent in the class, and part was because I had come to know many of the students better through interviews. On occasion Emily left the class, and some of the students began to approach me with questions.

Field Notes

I took continuous field notes of my observations, noting contextual information, what the students were doing and with whom they were interacting. As much as possible, I wrote down what was being said. I kept track of who was absent and who came to class late. I drew maps of the seating arrangements and kept an account of the physical surroundings of the classroom, noting details about posters, bulletin boards, notes on the blackboard, and various resources. I periodically recorded the time as well as specifics about the lesson in progress. I also paid attention to details of the students' appearance: what they were wearing, who had had a haircut or had an ear pierced, who appeared to be behaving out of character. I took notes describing other parts of the school, including the library, the gym, the science classroom, the hallways, and the staff room.

When I left the school, I would expand my rough jottings on the bus, in a coffee shop while waiting for a transfer, or at the university if I did not go home first. As soon as I got home, I would type up my field notes in more detail, followed by reflective comments and reminders to myself (for example, connections to the literature or new questions to add to subsequent interviews).

Document Collection

During the course of the year, I collected various documents: pedagogical materials, letters to parents, samples of student writing. The pedagogical materials kept me informed about the types of assignments the students were engaged in and helped me to understand the role these played in establishing, maintaining or disrupting classroom practices. The writing samples gave me a sense of their writing abilities in English, as well as providing insight into the social context of the community of practice, particularly in the case of journal writing. In addition, during the course of the project, several articles/letters about Coalfield School appeared in the local newspaper; as these articles related to themes significant to my research (e.g. racism, ethnic identity, inner city students), they proved to be instrumental as topics of discussion during the interviews.

Interviews

Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities, rather than a single, objective reality. Stake (1995) explains that case study researchers

> try hard to understand how the actors, the people being studied, see things. Ultimately, the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied, but the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening. (p. 12)

One of the ways in which I attempted to preserve a sense of multiple realities and to understand how the 'actors' saw things was to interview research participants. In order to get as broad a picture of the community of practice as possible, I wanted to interview participants who were differently positioned in terms of role, gender, ethnicity, and social status.

Emily and I had decided that I would begin the interviews after spring break, in early April. Emily introduced the topic of interviews in my absence, and then I explained this aspect of my research as well before handing out the permission letters. The students needed some reminding to return their permission forms, but over the next couple weeks eleven students returned permission forms. I interviewed all the students who returned their permission forms—seven boys and four girls. I was relieved that the sample included a good cross-section of students from the class (see chart in Chapter 4). However, there were a couple of students in particular I would have liked to interview who did not return forms. When asked, these students told me that their parents did not want them to be interviewed. I had interviewed three of the students in this class two years previously when I did the research in the Multicultural Leadership Class. Two of these students were amongst those I interviewed for my dissertation study.

The interviews were semi-structured; questions varied somewhat depending, for example, on whether students had learned English as a second language or on whether they were newcomers to the school. Although I had a set of questions prepared, the interviews were open-ended. Students were asked about their experiences of learning English (if relevant) and attending a multicultural school, relationships with peers and teachers, schoolwork, and life out-of-school. In some cases, the interview followed my list of questions closely, while others resembled what Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 97) refer to as "a conversation between two trusting parties." As the interviews progressed, new questions surfaced, and were added to subsequent interviews. The first six students interviewed were interviewed a second time. Students were interviewed on an individual basis with the following exception. Near the end of the school year a significant event (medieval feast) took place. At this point in time, I was particularly interested in issues of gender. As the medieval feast had highlighted this topic, following this event I interviewed two of the girls and two of the boys previously interviewed.

For the most part, the students were interviewed during Language Arts class time. Emily was willing to have me take students out of class for the interviews, but we did not want to disrupt their other classes, as this was a particularly busy time in the term. On occasion, I did make arrangements to interview students at other times. The interviews ranged in length, with several of them going over the class period of 57 minutes. Finding a private space for the interviews at times proved to be a challenge. I interviewed the students in three different rooms, depending on availability: the counsellor's room, an empty classroom, and the peer support room. I took various documents to ask the students about during the interviews: samples of student writing (e.g. essay on racism to refer to); pie charts they had drawn to represent individual work in group work; and newspaper clippings related to Coalfield School. All the interviews were audio-recorded. Although my priority was to focus on listening to what the students were saying, I did write some brief notes during the interviews. Later, I typed up notes following each interview including my reaction as to how I felt about the interview, initial themes that I had noticed, and any questions that came to mind.

Goldstein (2002) cautions ethnographers who undertake language learning research in linguistically and racially diverse communities to think carefully about how they will represent the experiences of their research participants. I had made provisions to use a translator for the interviews. During previous interviews I had done at the school with students from the Multicultural Leadership class, Lee, the school community coordinator had been present during two of the interviews to translate. For the purposes of this project, this turned out to be unnecessary as the ESL students interviewed were not at the early stages of English language learning. However, this is not to say that second language factors were insignificant. Tammivaara and Enright (1986) caution researchers who interview linguistic minority children to understand that these children have membership in four cultures: the native child culture, the native adult culture, the second child culture, and the second adult culture. Accordingly, the challenge to the researcher "who presumes to study these children is exponentially increased" (p. 235). Having had previous experience interviewing second language students at another inner city school where I did not have access to a translator, I was well aware that "cross-cultural interviewing is intriguing, challenging, and not a little precarious" (Pattan, 1990, p. 338).

I also interviewed several of the staff: the language arts teacher as well as two other Grade 9 teachers, a student teacher, the school community coordinator, and the principal. Interviews with staff were also semi-structured. Questions were directed towards interviewees' experiences in the school and with the Grade 9 students, in particular. Questions varied depending on interviewee's connection with the class, but there were some common questions–for example, "how would you describe the Grade 9 class?" In addition to the interviews, I had informal discussions with the students, the classroom teacher and other staff members on an ongoing basis throughout the course of the study.

For the most part, the transcribing was done in the summer, following the completion of the interviews. I debated as to whether or not to do my own transcribing. I decided to transcribe the student interviews and to hire someone to transcribe the adult interviews. Although I knew it would be time consuming, I wanted to transcribe the student interviews myself for various reasons. Many of the students were ESL students, and several were soft-spoken, and needed some prompting. As the interviewer, I had a better chance of making sense of what had been said–I knew the students and the context. On several occasions when it was difficult to hear, the notes I had taken during the interviews proved to be extremely valuable in helping me to piece together what had been said. I felt the time was well spent. As well, I became very familiar with the raw data, which in turn facilitated the initial data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

> Theorizing is the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among those categories. It consists of playing with data and ideas. Data analysis depends on theorizing: it is the fundamental tool of any researcher. It is used to develop or confirm explanations for how and why things happen as they do. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 239)

Qualitative researchers analyze data throughout the study rather than relegating analysis to a period following data collection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). This certainly describes my experience; analysis began with the first fieldwork observation and was carried on throughout the research process in a reflective journal. Numerous analytic memos, written during the course of my fieldwork, accompanied my field notes. Still, when I was faced with a stack of field notes, numerous transcribed interviews, and a substantial, yet fragmented, literature review following the completion of the research project, I was overwhelmed.

Ely et al. (1997) note that "decisions about the basic story we are going to tell will have implications for the shape that the overall document will take, for what pieces of analysis need to be included and what are now irrelevant or excessive for the purpose at hand" (p.188). The awareness that I could write many possible dissertations from the data I had collected gave me a mixed feeling, part pressure (how *would* I choose which story to tell?) and part freedom (I *could* choose which story to tell). For reasons explained earlier, my choice of foci in the field for close observations had not been completely clear in the early stages of my project. Furthermore, as my intention was to examine the class as a community of practice, rather than focusing on a particular student or a small number of students, the scope of my study was broad. This made initial decisions as to what could be considered excessive and/or unimportant to the study more difficult.

Analysis consists of giving order to the details; while analytic methods vary in their specifics, they each employ a coding of data (Ely et al., 1997). Graue and Walsh (1998, p. 163) define *coding* as labeling themes that are represented by chunks of data. From this perspective, codes are merely the signifiers for ideas, analytic categories that a researcher has identified in the data. I began what Merriam (1988) refers to as "holding a conversation with the data" (p. 131). I read through the field notes and the interview transcriptions, making notes in the margins and highlighting aspects of the data I regarded as significant. As relationships and patterns within and among the codes began to crystallize, I inserted colour coded tags for the emergent themes–language, gender, ethnicity/culture, talk/dialogue, relationships, social structure, hands-on learning, and research issues.

Writing this, it sounds as if it happened in a tidy and efficient manner. Not so–it was a messy and time-consuming process. I read and reread my field notes and interview transcripts, asking myself how they informed each other. I looked at other dissertations and referred to several texts on qualitative/ethnographic research for their accounts of data analysis, including Spradley's (1979) on domain analysis, which I had used extensively for my master's thesis. Ely et al. (1997) remind researchers that these processes are not an end in themselves; rather, they "are the basis for 'lifting' to a more abstract theme statement or other interpretive presentation" (p. 162).

> (Interpretation) illuminates, throws light on experience. It brings out, and refines, as when butter is clarified, the meanings that can be sifted from a text, an object, or a slice of experience. (Denzin, 1994, p. 504)

Ely et al. (1997) explain that, although the entire research process is broadly interpretive, there comes a time when a researcher discusses how 'the literature in the field' and other sources of information led to understanding–for me, that time had come. The next step was to come up with what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) refer to as a "working interpretive document that contains the writer's initial attempts to make sense of what he or she has learned" (p. 14). Interpretation of data requires that ethnographers specify what the data mean for the questions asked in the study and why particular meanings are salient (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). For me, this was the most challenging, and at the same time, the most exciting part of the process.[1] Of the many doubts I experienced during the course of the research process, the most pressing one relates to LeCompte and Preissle's (1993) comment that "the implications of the study tell a reader how the research is useful beyond an intriguing analysis of a unique case" (p. 267). My doubts centered on the significance of my study and were typically characterized by my thinking, "This is *interesting*, but *so what?*" What meanings could be drawn from the analyzed data? What was the relationship between the literature that framed my study and the data? How would I communicate this to the reader? Interpretation pushed me to address these questions.

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[1] I should note that the interpretations are mine alone. Emily did not read and respond to drafts of the writing. The actual writing of my dissertation happened slowly. Emily left Coalfield School after the research project ended, and I moved away sometime later. By the time I had completed drafts, we were no longer in touch.

Ethical Considerations and Research Relationships

Like Tilley (1998), I want to conduct "respectful research, research sensitive to individual participants and research contexts, with both researcher and participants benefiting—research that include(s) but push(es) beyond concerns for ethical behaviour by the researcher" (p. 317). Now that the research project is over, I cannot help but wonder just how short I fell of my desire. I followed the procedures and met the requirements for carrying out what is considered to be ethical research at my university. I passed a departmental ethics review and my application to the appropriate school board for permission to conduct research in a school setting was approved. I conducted the research in accordance with the SSHRC Guidelines for using human subjects. More specifically this meant that: 1) Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and that withdrawing from the study in no way affected students' school grades. 2) Informed consent of participants was obtained through a consent form. In the case of student participants, parents or guardians signed a consent form. In addition to the parental/guardian consent form, I provided a consent form for the students to sign. 3) Confidentiality and anonymity was assured by the use of pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

Tilley (1998) asks us, as researchers, to recognize the limitations of ethics reviews. Likening her research with incarcerated women to doing research with schoolchildren, she points out that on the ethics form 'schoolchildren' are listed as a 'captive population' and suggests that the official permissions signed by school districts, schools, and parents often protect researchers and institutions more than the participants themselves. This gave me something to think about, as I reexamined the components of my ethics review. When I interviewed participants, they were informed of their right to stop the interview at any time. However, the students were not consulted about my presence in the classroom as a researcher. Tilley makes the point that participant observations in schools can be intrusive and that we need to consider how our efforts in classroom inquiry affect individual students, as well as the class as a whole. I will return to this topic later in the dissertation.

Another concern that surfaced involved informed consent. As the time to conduct interviews approached, I met with the principal to discuss the permission letters. I wondered about the second language issue as many of the parents spoke little English. The principal explained that what typically happens, especially with the older students, is that they explain what the letter is about in their own words, and, if it is something they want, get their parents to sign. To Ruth, this was not really informed consent. We made arrangements that, if necessary, we would involve the school community coordinator to assist with the process if a translator was needed.

As for confidentiality and anonymity, due to the particular make-up of the school and class involved, I learned that assuring anonymity was not as simple as providing research participants with pseudonyms. In light of this, I made additional changes to protect the identities of the individuals involved.

The most significant way in which my research fell short, though, is that I wanted my research project to yield more than a dissertation–I wanted my participants to benefit as well. I saw that the best way to do this was for my research project to be collaborative in nature, similar to the forms of research Wells (1999) calls for, research that:

1. Recognize(s) that, to bring about change, educational research needs to be collaborative, involving classroom participants as well as university researchers in situated inquiries that start from current practice; and
2. Allow(s) place within the research design for new ways of learning and teaching to emerge as teachers explore what they and their students *might be able to achieve*.

This is what I had hoped for. Ideally, my preference would have been to conduct collaborative action research with a teacher who shared a common research interest. Packer and Addison (1989) note that, in interpretive inquiry

> the choice of a point of view or perspective often becomes a careful and deliberate one. And it is often seen to involve establishing a relationship with those who participate with us, and working out a mode of engagement with them. Far from being detached and neutral, we need to adopt a perspective that is engaged and concerned. (p. 34)

This certainly describes my situation. Although in many respects, my research was open-ended, naturally I had expectations for what I hoped to accomplish. And the type of relationships established made a difference as to the direction the research would take. In their work on collaborative research, Clandinin and Connelly (1988) refer to the 'negotiation of practice'–the daily give-and-take of a working classroom relationship. Researcher and practitioner need to negotiate mutually acceptable practices for their work together; negotiation is an ongoing part of collaborative research that cannot be taken for granted. I do not feel comfortable about the degree of negotiation in my research study–this was not because I was unwilling to negotiate, but rather due to particular circumstances of the project (time constraints, Emily's notion of research, etc.).

I could identify with Lee (2001), who writes about the ethical dilemma she experienced during her dissertation work, an ethnography of a principal. Over the course of the study, she found herself uncomfortable as she listened to racist remarks, observed corporal punishment, collected reports of sexual harassment and recorded instances of illegal behavior; she had, however, promised confidentiality and nonintervention in her ethics review. She suggests that if her study had been a collaborative action research model, the study could have been critical research, provoking the "dialogic encounter" necessary to develop "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1970). It would have resolved the researcher/researched dilemma because the principal would have been the focus of his own inquiry. Lee notes that, to some extent, her ethnography is autobiographical, reflecting her own development of "critical consciousness." She shares her story "to invite other researchers to participate in praxis–shared reflection and action on the world in order to transform it" (p. 71). While the dilemma I encountered with Emily was not as serious, it does touch on the aspect of my research that I find most troubling–it was not collaborative, and it did little to change practice. I tried to ensure that my research practices were not exploitative; still, as can be seen, there were flaws in the study. I reminded myself that

> no controversy attends the fact that too much ignorance exists in the world to allow us to await perfect research methods before proceeding. Ultimately we have to make up our minds whether our research is worth doing or not, and then determine how to go about it in such ways that it best serves our purported goals. (Patai, 1994, p. 37)

Cracks in the Study

Every research study has limitations–I came to think of those in mine as 'cracks.' In addition to wanting to begin my project in the beginning of September (mentioned earlier), I had requested a Grade 7 class, as I was interested in the transition process from elementary to junior high. However, as alluded to in the prologue, there were more serious concerns with the research site, in terms of my research intentions/theoretical framework. Part of the problem related to the nature of the ESL students. Although the majority of the students in the class spoke English as a second language, most of the ESL students were not at the early stages of English language learning. Many of these students had been in Canada since they were in preschool, and several considered themselves more proficient in English than in their mother tongue. This is not to say that issues of second language learning were not of consequence, but that in the community of practice framework I had conceptualized, ESL students were in the minority as well as in earlier stages of English language learning. Ironically, the two students in Grade 9 who were recent immigrants and considered 'ESL' in terms of funding did not attend the language arts class; during that time, they received ESL pull-out instruction with the school community coordinator.

A related concern was that the majority population in the class (and school) was Cambodian. While this in itself turned out to be one of the most fascinating aspects of the study, once again it did not fit into my proposed theoretical framework as it meant that the native English students were not the (so-called) 'mainstream.' The final point of concern was that the class was unusually small. It was for these reasons that the suggestion was made that I treat my project as a pilot study, apply to the school board for a new site, and begin my research again. I had many doubts about my work and sought confirmation as to whether I should proceed. In her book, *The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature,* Butala (1994) writes about how she struggled with whether she should give up or continue to write the book.

> My reasons still held: I had no sense that I should give the book up, although the problem of where to go next in it was still unsolved. But I knew, as I've always known with each book, that the best parts aren't pieces that I imagine myself, at least that's not how I conceive of them. They seem instead to come in a split second of insight, as if the inside of my body were, at such times, a darkened theatre into which a shaft of wisdom, some visionary light, suddenly is thrust before the light goes quickly out again. (p. 96)

Like Butala, my reasons still held. I felt that, despite the flaws, my project was worth pursuing, although I could not say with Butala's certainty that I *knew*. She "hoped for a sign that would act as a stamp of approval" (p. 97). I, too, looked for signs, finding one with Cohen's song: "We asked for signs, the signs were sent." I had to have faith that into the cracks, shafts of light would come. As it turned out, light did break through each of the cracks mentioned here. I will speak to one of these now; the remainder I will address in due course in the remaining chapters. Stake (1995) makes the point that "the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does" (p. 8). In my candidacy proposal I wrote:

> It is true that I approach this research with certain other cases in my mind, particularly Toohey's community of practice studies. So, it will be important for me to remember that, while I will inevitably make comparisons, the data gathered will be interpreted in relation to the specific participants involved in my study.

In the early stages of the project, I was preoccupied with how my project was 'different' from others. I was not paying due attention to the 'particulars,' which is what provides the "thick description" (Geertz, 1983) characteristic of ethnography. When I forgot my perfect offering and focused on the unique features of *my* case, I began to notice how the light *was* getting through the cracks.

And, while these were the initial cracks to cause concern, others arose over the course of the research. Some I realized at the time, while others I did not become aware of until after the fieldwork was over, and I was trying to make sense of the data and beginning to write. I worried about how much was taking shape, after the research was over:

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…a year after finishing the research project, and I finally think I've figured some things out, now that it's too late. It seems kind of unfair, but I guess it's all part of the process. I don't know how many others experience this. For me, it's been not until the research project is long over, that it's become clear just what it is I would like to have focused on, plus several things I could have done to improve my research project.

I could certainly relate to Ely et al.'s (1997) observation that "one of the most fascinating and sometimes frightening aspects of qualitative research is its emergent nature. Nowhere is this more evident than during the interwoven processes of writing and recursive analysis" (p. 175). I will speak to the "what I would really like to have focused on" point in the final chapter when I discuss topics for further research. The "what could I have done differently" question, though, deserves mention here. To have a fuller picture of classroom practices (in particular, discourse practices), I should have tape recorded classroom interaction. When I discussed this with Emily early in the project, she felt that the students would be uncomfortable with this. Although I tended to agree, this posed a limitation on the type of data I was able to collect. I would have asked other questions, in addition to the ones I did. I would like to have spent more time observing the Grade 9 students in other classes, in particular the science class (taught by Emily) and the social studies class (taught by Darren). I would have liked to follow the students to high school the following year. That, however, would be *another* study.

CHAPTER 4

THAT'S HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN: ILLUMINATING COMMUNITY PRACTICES

> A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise. United by this common enterprise, people come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values–in short, practice–as a function of their joint engagement in activity. Simultaneously, social relations form around the activities and activities form around the relationships. Particular kinds of knowledge, expertise, and forms of participation become part of individuals' identities and places in the community…A community of practice is simultaneously defined by its membership and shared practice in which that membership engages.[1] (Eckert, 2000, p. 35)

Introduction

In this chapter, I use a community of practice analysis to examine practices in one Grade 9 language arts classroom. As they came together in the common enterprise of Grade 9 language arts, the research participants had developed ways of doing things, ways of talking, social relations and identities. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) note that the concept of a C of P "emphasises the notion of 'practice' as central to an understanding of why the concept offers something different to researchers than the traditional term 'community'" (p. 174). This notion of 'practice' helped me to understand what was going on in my research site. When I let go of the original conception for what my study 'should' accomplish, I realized that much light had seeped through the cracks. My focus, no longer on specific students learning English, became the 'practices' of a group of community members.[2] "Rather than investing language with a special analytic status, the community of practice framework considers language as one of many social practices in which participants engage" (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 210). In their study of ESL learners in primary classrooms, Toohey and Day (1999) consider "what it might be about particular practices that seems to facilitate learners' possibilities for coming to learn how to participate as members of their communities" (p. 42).

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[1] This is an expanded version of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) definition.

[2] Practices here mean recurring social actions that are "invested with normative expectations and with meanings and significances that go beyond immediate goals of the actions" (Miller & Goodnow, 1995, p. 7, cited in Toohey & Day, 1999).

What practices had emerged in this Grade 9 language arts class? The particular practices that I observed and describe in this chapter can be grouped into three broad categories: social practices; discourse practices; and identity practices. It is important to keep in mind that, rather than being separate as presented, these practices were interrelated and overlapping. It is the nature of writing a dissertation, however, to proceed section by section, and chapter by chapter. Some of the questions that framed my examination were: What social relations had community members formed? What role did gender and ethnicity play in these interactions? What discourse practices were at work in the classroom? How did these help to determine what was learned? What identities were students offered? Which identities were accepted? Before devoting a section to each type of practice mentioned, I will provide an overall description of the community of practice.

The Community of Practice

The community of practice that comprised my research site was one Grade 9 language arts classroom. Although there was only one Grade 9 class in the school, the C of P I studied was somewhat different from the Grade 9 class as a whole. The Grade 9 class moved as a group for the core subjects. There were two Grade 9 boys–recent immigrants from China– who were not enrolled in the language arts class; during this time they received ESL instruction. So, although these students were part of the Grade 9 class, they were not members of the language arts classroom community of practice. At the time I began the research project, 17 students were registered in the language arts class. In addition to the students, other members in the community were the teacher, student teachers (from time to time), and myself. On occasion, there would be an extra student in class–Emily sometimes supervised students from other grades for in-school suspensions. Within the classroom, there were also overlapping communities (e.g. the students who spoke Vietnamese, the boys who were on the badminton team, the Asian girls). However, my focus was to consider the classroom as the main community of practice; this enabled me to concentrate on the practices that bound it.

Of the 17 students registered in the Language Arts class at the time I began the research, approximately 13 attended school on a regular basis. As I began visiting the class, I became familiar with the core group of students who attended school regularly. In addition, there was considerable movement over the course of the year, with new students arriving and others leaving. For example, there were two girls on the class list that I did not meet as they did not return to school. There were more boys in the class than girls–excluding the two girls and two boys already mentioned, there were 13 boys and 7 girls registered in the class over the course of the year. The students came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the students were Asian: Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Chinese. There were several Caucasian students; only one was there for the entire year, though. The others either left early, came late, or both. Over the course of the school year, there were four Aboriginal students on the class register.[3] Two were the girls mentioned above that left school sometime in the fall. One was a boy who attended infrequently at the beginning of the year, then disappeared until June. The fourth was a boy who showed up in April and attended very infrequently; over the next two months, I only saw him twice. Many of the students were immigrants who spoke English as a second language. Most had come to Canada when very young and had started to learn English in kindergarten. For these students, their memories of learning English had faded; in some cases, they now considered themselves more proficient in English than in their first language. For the two students who were more recent immigrants (a girl from Vietnam and a boy from China), learning English continued to be a challenging aspect of their school experience.

The charts (see Tables 1 and 2) provide a list of all the students who were registered over the course of the year in the Grade 9 language arts class. The chart includes gender, ethnicity, 1st language, and other information such as how long they had attended Coalfield School. Table 1 shows the students who were interviewed and Table 2 represents the remainder of the class. The voices of the students who were interviewed are highlighted in the dissertation; however, as the study was of the language arts class as a community of practice, I have included brief descriptions of the other students, as well.[4] The names of the boys who did not attend the language arts class as well as the girls who dropped out are mentioned, as this information helps to contextualize particular issues to be addressed (for example, second language learning and transience). Table 3 gives a list of the staff members who were interviewed and whose voices appear in the dissertation. Although these participants were all involved in some way with the students in the Grade 9 language arts class, it is important to note that they were not all members of the community of practice. They were part of a contextualizing C of P, the larger school. In varying ways, these participants helped me to understand the C of P being studied, by providing contrastive description and explanations as to what he or she thought was 'going on.'

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[3] I realize there are legal and other differences sometimes associated with these terms, but for the purpose of this work the terms Aboriginal, Native and First Nations will be used interchangeably, dependent on speaker and context.

Table 1: Background Information of Students Interviewed (names are pseudonyms)

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	1st Lang.	Other Information
Sarun	M	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Thailand. Came to Canada at age 3. At the school since kindergarten. Mr. Cool.
Darith	M	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Thailand. Came to Canada at age 5. At the school since kindergarten. Class chatterbox.
Dith	M	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Thailand. Came to Canada at age 1. At the school since Grade 3. Struggling academically.
Roeun	M	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Canada. Parents from Cambodia. At the school since kindergarten. Reputed to be shy with girls.
Chanda	F	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Thailand. Came to Canada before age 1. At the school since kindergarten. Very quiet in class.
Kim	F	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Born in Canada. Parents from Vietnam. At the school since kindergarten. Academic achiever.
Hộng	M	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Born in Hong Kong. Came to Canada at age 3. At the school since kindergarten. Academic achiever.
Nouy	F	Vietnamese	Vietnamese	Born in Vietnam. Came to Canada at age 8. At the school since Grade 3. Had worked hard to learn English.
Shu	F	Chinese	Cantonese	Born in China. Came to Canada at age 10. At the school since Grade 6. ESL learning in progress.
Dylan	M	Anglo-Canadian	English	Born in Canada. At the school since February. Was quiet in class and had poor attendance.
Adrena	F	Anglo-Canadian	English	Born in Canada. At the school since December. Outspoken. Had difficulties fitting in.

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[4] Some of these descriptions were the teacher's observations; naturally, others would characterize these students differently.

Table 2: Background Information of Students Not Interviewed

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	1st Lang.	Other
Neary	F	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Cambodia. Regular attendee. At the school since kindergarten.
Savuth	M	Cambodian	Khmer	Born in Cambodia. Regular attendee. At the school since kindergarten.
Carline	F	Anglo-Canadian	English	Left for another school at spring break. Had been student council president.
Justin	M	Anglo-Canadian	English	At the school since kindergarten. Regular attendance.
Craig	M	Aboriginal	English	Extremely poor attendance. At school for two years; away months at a time.
Noah	M	Anglo-Canadian	English	Arrived from Niagara Falls in November and left in December.
Spencer	M	Aboriginal	English	Arrived in April. Extremely irregular attendance.
Jamie	F	Anglo-Canadian	English	Arrived in early May. Good attendance from her arrival.
Jeremy	M	Anglo-Canadian	English	Arrived from Regina in late May. Attended irregularly till end of year.
Ben	M	Chinese	Mandarin	Arrived from China the previous year.
Fung	M	Chinese	Mandarin	Arrived from China at start of term.
Crystal	F	Aboriginal	English	Left school shortly after I began observations.
Cecilia	F	Metis	English	Left school shortly after I began observations.

Table 3: Coalfield Staff Interviewed (names are pseudonyms[5]

Name	Background Information
Emily Carstairs Junior high teacher	Was in her second year at Coalfield School. Had worked previously at two other inner city schools. Had trained as a P. E. teacher. Taught the Grade 9 students language arts and science.
Darren Williams Junior high teacher	Was in his third year at the school. This was his first teaching job, but had been a teacher's aide for several years. Was the homeroom teacher for Grade 9 and also taught them Social Studies and P. E.
Barry Chalmers Junior high teacher	Was in his third year at the school. Had taught at another inner city school and worked previously for years as a computer analyst. Taught the Grade 9 students mathematics.
Lee Chow School/community coordinator	Had been at the school for 12 years. Spoke English, Vietnamese and several Chinese dialects. Worked with recent ESL students, provided support to classroom teachers and liaised with community.
Ruth Patnorev Principal	Had been principal at the school for 3 years. When she had begun her position (in March), she was the 4th principal that year.
Lori Richardson Student teacher	Completing a six-week practicum in the junior high classes as the final component in a teacher education program, University of Toronto.

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[5] The reason that the teachers have been given last names (and the students have not) is that the teachers are sometimes referred to by their last names in the text.

Social Practices

> By defining the community as a group of people oriented to the same practice, through not necessarily in the same way, the community of practice model treats difference and conflict, not uniformity and consensus, as the ordinary state of affairs. The inherent heterogeneity of the community of practice also brings marginal members to the forefront of analysis. One reason for this shift to the margins is that some peripheral members are recognized as novices, as in Lave and Wenger's (1991) original formulation. (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 210)

I had hoped to begin the fieldwork in early September so that I could observe how the 'community' formed. Rather, the class had been together for close to two months by the time I began my role as a participant observer. Although this was disappointing to me, there were also advantages to entering a C of P where social relations and classroom practices were already established. As a newcomer positioned on the periphery of classroom activities, I was able to get a sense of how things were done in this C of P. What did I notice as an observer entering from the outside? My initial impression was of a class divided, in terms of social relations, into what Toohey (1996) terms sub-communities (which might be seen as overlapping in membership). These divisions seemed to have something to do with, in particular, how students were positioned in terms of ethnicity and gender, as well as whether or not they were 'newcomers' to the class. I begin this section on social practices with an explanation of how the 'community' was seen by various participants, using the notion of 'newcomers' as a starting point for analysis. In the second part I examine practices that relate to ethnicity. In particular, I consider what happens when the social arrangements in external society are inverted in school. In the final component, gendered practices are highlighted, with a focus on the different ways boys and girls engage (or do not engage) with school.

As mentioned earlier, the practice that community members in my study were oriented to was Grade 9 language arts. This section emphasises how what is being learned is often not what the teacher is teaching or what the teacher thinks is being learned–in this case, much of what the students were learning pertains to the social structure of the C of P. Furthermore, although the students 'know' that the purpose of the class is to learn the Grade 9 language arts curriculum, they engage with that purpose in very different ways, depending on their ethnicity, gender and other factors. This results in a varied response to this situation, and a variegated kind and intensity of participation in the C of P by all participants, including the teacher. As I proceed, it will become clear to the reader just how varied orientations to this shared practice were as well as the ways in which difference and conflict were inherent to the C of P.

Breaking into the Community (Incorporating Newcomers)

> (N)ewcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an "observational" lookout post: It crucially involves *participation* as a way of learning–of both absorbing and being absorbed in–the "culture of practice." An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.95)

While the comments made above provide a glimpse as to my first thoughts about the C of P, an incident that happened during class provided an opportunity for me to get a sense as to how other members thought about the 'community.' As part of an assignment for an oral communication unit, each student had to give a prepared speech in front of the class. As no one was willing to volunteer, Emily was having students take turns according to the date of their birthday (anyone born in January would go first, and so on). Emily would ask whose birthday was next, and, invariably, one of the students would provide the answer. After she had been told a few birthdays, she announced to the class, "That's what I like about this community—you all know each other so well. If it's your month, I know someone will tell me."

I was intrigued by Emily's choice of the word community to describe the class. Due to time constraints, I was unable to explain the community of practice framework when I introduced the project to Emily. How would Emily's idea of 'community' compare to my tentative understandings of the class through a C of P analysis? It seemed as though Emily saw the class as more cohesive than I did. How was the *community* seen by various members, depending on how they were positioned (for example, teacher, student, girl, boy, Asian, White)? I decided to explore Emily's comment when I conducted interviews. When reminded about the comment, Emily proceeded to describe the class as

> incredibly close knit. I think that they would look out for each other in a community setting. And, you know, it's so important to a teenager to have a sense of belonging, and I think that has been awesome for them. The Cambodian and Vietnamese kids, at least, feel that they belong. Whereas it's the opposite for the White and Native kids—they don't feel that they belong.

Emily appears to be viewing the class along ethnic lines, with the Asian students belonging (inside) and the White and Native students not belonging (outside). Utilizing Lave and Wenger's notion of LPP, though, all members within a C of P are considered to be 'legitimate'–all the students in the class have legitimacy by virtue of being in Grade 9 language arts.[6] Why, then, did the White and Native students *feel* that they did not belong? Or why did Emily feel they felt they did not belong? When examining Emily's comment, the time factor needs to be taken into consideration. Not only were the Asian students in the majority, they also constituted a stable population, in particular the Cambodian students. Most had attended Coalfield School since kindergarten, while the Caucasian and First Nations students were more transient. Transience, so often associated with inner-city schools, tended, for the most part, to be limited to the White and Aboriginal students.

When asked about the teacher's 'community' comment during interviews, the Asian students tended to agree that they knew each other well. Their explanations were similar. For example, Hông told me that "we live close to each other, and we've been like together for a long time." Similarly, Kim explained: "Well, we live near each other, and we've been with each other for a long time, a very long time." These two students had been together at Coalfield School for a long time–since kindergarten. However, these explanations that emphasise time do not take into consideration the people who had most recently entered into the C of P, or to use Lave and Wenger's term, 'newcomers.' For example, Adrena, who joined the class in December, had a different response to the community comment: "Nobody knows who I am or when my birthday is." She belongs in the sense that her place in the class is 'legitimate', but as a newcomer, her sense of belonging was slight. Adrena's first impressions of the class tend to confirm Emily's "close knit" comment, though:

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[6] Mosenthal (1996) explains that legitimacy is about the degree of involvement or sense of belonging in a social group or practice, whereas participation is about the growing intensity or fullness of participation in the social group (i.e social practices).

> It was really weird, because the minute I walked into class I'm like, "Oh God, everyone here knows everyone like the back of their hand." The first thing I wanted to know was how am I going to make friends 'cause everyone knew each other so well, and there were these little cliques. I was just wondering if I was going to be accepted.

Similarly, Dylan, who began attending the school in February, told me that he was

> shocked that everyone knew each other real well 'cause at other schools people know each other but like not as well as people know each other here. I talked to people and they've been in the same classes since like elementary all the way up to Grade 9. And, like that example about everyone knowing their birthdays really surprised me.

Obviously, not *everyone* knew each other that well, but to newcomers it appeared that way. It is important to make a distinction between the C of P (as described earlier) and the community as implied by these comments. Although the Grade 9 language arts class came together on the first day of school in September, many of the members brought to that C of P previous connections and relationships that shaped the new C of P. While all the members of the class were in theory newcomers, many were 'old-timers' in the larger school and neighbourhood communities of practice.[7] Darren, who taught the students social studies and physical education, makes this point, below:

> They've been together, a lot of them, so long. Time makes them a community. Plus, we do a lot of extra curricular activities in the evenings and on the weekend with the kids here, like the badminton club. So, what makes them a community is not only do they interact in the classroom, but they interact outside of the classroom, at activities that are not academically based, but based in the school.

Once again, this comment applies to many (but not all) of the students. The Asian students, in particular, reported taking part in the extra-curricular activities that Darren mentioned—for these youth, the school was a significant part of their lives beyond school hours. Many of the students lived in the neighborhood and had attended Coalfield school for years. They had developed close friendships, in some cases beginning in kindergarten. However, the group of students who form this tight community are not the whole classroom, nor the whole 'working unit' in the C of P. Adrena, for example, is a newcomer to this C of P, but she is not a member of the 'old-timer group' that enters into this class and forms the central core of the C of P. While the 'old-timer' group is made tighter by the school's extracurricular work, the C of P as a working unit is not necessarily strengthened by it. Rather, that this 'old-timers' group was so firmly established made it more difficult for newcomers to 'break into the community.'[8]

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[7] For my purposes, when I use the term old-timer, it will be to refer to the group of students who are old-timers in the school and neighbourhood, unless otherwise noted.

The following comments, made by some of the Asian students, suggest the C of P may have some difficulties incorporating newcomers: "It's hard for us to talk to them." "It's weird for us." "I'm with my friends and don't notice them." Adrena viewed her experiences of exclusion in terms of ethnicity—she felt that she was treated as an 'outsider' because she was White. Justin, however, the only White boy in the class until Dylan's arrival, was an accepted member of the C of P. Having attended Coalfield School since kindergarten, he was an old-timer in both the new C of P and the long-term school groupings. Darren's view, rather, was that lack of acceptance was more to do with being a newcomer: "All newcomers—it doesn't matter what their background—are treated the same, but those that stay tend to do better. They start to be drawn into the group." He explained that newcomers

> have trouble breaking into the family. They come and go, and so for these students who have formed these tight friendships that are based over years of being together, they see most of our students of European or Native backgrounds come and go…Our students of Asian descent, once they're here they usually stay, or for at least long enough that they become part of the community.

During the time I observed the class, all 'newcomers' were either White or Aboriginal. However, two of the Asian students who had not been at Coalfield School since kindergarten told me how difficult it was for them when they first arrived. Nouy, now participating fully as a member of the C of P, had been teased by many of the Cambodian students when she first arrived from Vietnam six years earlier. Shu, an immigrant from China who had first attended another school in the city, told me that "at first I came here, right, those Cambodian people, they like always make fun of me, other country people. But, in their country, all people they don't make fun of." Both Nouy and Shu make reference to the Cambodian students, in particular. As the dominant ethnic group in terms of numbers, this group held power in both the school and the C of P. This topic will be furthered in the next section. Although I would disagree somewhat with Darren that all students are treated the same, time clearly played a role in how they were incorporated into the C of P. Along with the time factor, though, Darren also considered personality to be important in the manner in which newcomers were absorbed into the C of P.

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[8] As will be seen later, this also posed particular challenges for the teacher.

> A small portion may be race-orientated, but the majority of it came down to individual personality. Those that also have a more relaxed demeanor, that are not boisterous, or loud are more likely to be readily accepted.

In this regard, Darren contradicts himself partly, as he goes on to equate personality with ethnicity rather than an 'individual' characteristic. Why was being loud and boisterous a problem? Darren explains:

> I think, culturally, the Cambodian are a more quiet people. In their cultural background, someone who's loud and boisterous is frowned on.

On the one hand, he refers to personality as an individual characteristic; on the other hand, he attributes personality traits to a group of people, based on ethnicity. In addition to being a newcomer, Darren considered Adrena's personality to be another reason for her non-acceptance into the community:

> Adrena's a loud girl. She's blunt. To fit in, she needs to be less boisterous, to have more of a relaxed demeanor. It comes down to being not so much racial because there's a new Grade eight boy who's Native background, who has a similar demeanor as the Cambodian and Vietnamese students. He's a little quieter, calmer, more relaxed, and they ask him to do everything.

Having taught for years in Aboriginal communities, I had frequently encountered similar comments about Aboriginal students, in particular, that they are all silent. In those teaching contexts, this generalized comment had not made much sense to me. I found myself resisting Darren's description, which seemed to essentialize Cambodian people. I thought of two of the Cambodian boys whom I did not experience as particularly quiet: Darith whom I had nicknamed the giggler and Sarun who kept an ongoing commentary of jokes and singing from his seat at the back of the classroom. As the reader will see later in the chapter, though, I had much to learn about this topic in *this* context. Darren offers one more reason as to why he thinks Adrena was having difficulty being accepted into the community.

> Adrena is having a tough time. Still, she got to a stage where she was kind of accepted. She was sitting back here, and she helped a few of the students with work. She was slowly being integrated in, but then she left again for a while, so she lost her opportunity to be engaged in the community. I find when students do that they're really tough on re-engaging somebody.

I mentioned earlier that the 'old-timers' were also regular attendees; transience was a problem at the school, but not for the Cambodian and Vietnamese students, and other old-timers. For newcomers who attended school regularly (and stayed long enough), chances of being absorbed into the C of P were higher. On one level, this makes sense for any C of P–Lave and Wenger (1991) note that "an extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs" (p. 95). It takes time to learn the practices of a community, to get to know the other members, to become absorbed into the "culture of practice." This proved to be especially important in this particular C of P for newcomers such as Adrena who found the practices to be very unfamiliar.

In this introductory section, we have also begun to see, with Adrena, an example of Bucholtz's point that "the inherent heterogeneity of the community of practice …brings marginal members to the forefront of analysis" (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 210). The community that Emily saw as 'incredibly close knit' was not the C of P that I was seeing (although she was correct about the old-timers). At the same time, as marginal members, newcomers helped to make established practices more visible, shedding light on the ways of doing things that had developed in the community.[9] It is also important to keep in mind that while Adrena is a marginal member of the C of P (for now), LPP is an interactive process in which the learner engages by simultaneously performing in *several roles* (from subordinate to expert), "each implying a different sort of responsibility, a different set of role relations, and a different interactive involvement" (Lave & Wenger,

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[9] The role of newcomers in the C of P will be explored further in the chapter on disrupting community practices.

1991, p. 23). In terms of the established social practices in the classroom, Adrena can clearly be considered a novice. However, in terms of discourse practices, for example, we will see that Adrena holds more of an expert role (although this positions her at odds with the old-timers). Over the course of the chapter, I will illustrate the ways in which this core group was instrumental in shaping many of the practices at work in the C of P (e.g. criteria for forming social relations, what constitutes acceptable behaviour for girls and boys, expectations for engaging in classroom discourse). I will also explore the ways in which particular practices were important to the long term social relationships that support and sustain the old-timers, but were in other ways detrimental to the community's "common enterprise" of learning the Grade 9 language arts curriculum.

'Like a White Outcast' (When the 'Minority' is the 'Majority')

> I think the second day I went home and I'm like, "Oh, my God, I'm an outcast! I'm a White outcast in a White society!" That was the first thing I said when I walked in my door at home. My sister sort of laughed at me. But it, it's hard getting used to being the minority. Adrena

What happens when social arrangements in external society are inverted in school–when the (usual) 'majority' becomes the 'minority'? For the oldtimers at Coalfield School, this was simply standard practice. For example, when Kim, a student of Vietnamese heritage who had attended the school since kindergarten, was asked what it was like attending a multicultural school, her response was: "What's it like? Well, I've been here so long, I don't know. It's just normal." To Adrena, though, the situation seemed anything but "normal." Gee (1992) explains that people who are somewhat 'marginal' to a Discourse or culture (or C of P), often have insights into the workings of these Discourses or cultures that more 'mainstream' members do not. In some respects, Adrena matched this description; at the same time, her interpretations of the way things worked in the community were not necessarily accurate. Used to schools in which she was, as a White student, a member of the majority, Adrena was both unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the ethnic composition at Coalfield School.

How did these inverted relations play out at Coalfield School? One way was that members of the dominant society were put in the position of being in a minority and confronted with their ethnicity. Kelly (1998) makes the point that "Whites within society do not have their ethnicity made apparent.[10] For many Whites, ethnicity is something that belongs to someone else" (p. 49). Similarly, Britzman (1991), in her ethnographic study of teaching, notes that

> the majority of the persons in this text did not speak about their own race, class, or gender...Certain things were not spoken about and these silences are significant...In the situation of race, part of the silence may well be because these persons worked and learned in racially segregated contexts where, as Caucasians, they were the norm, and consequently could not locate themselves as raced". (pp. 233-4)

That Coalfield School had its share of silences will be made evident over the course of the chapter; Whites at Coalfield School, though, had their ethnicity made apparent. Used to taking her Whiteness for granted, Adrena, for example, became very aware that she was White. The following, told to me by Lori, a student teacher, emphasises this:

> I was talking to Adrena earlier in the gym during the assembly, and she was counting. I could hear her counting. And I said, "What are you counting?" And, she said, "Oh, I'm counting all the White people in the school."

At Coalfield School, Whites *were* the visible minority, making it easy for Adrena to count them at an assembly. Kim, on the other hand, who found the situation at Coalfield "normal", was confronted with her difference in contexts outside the school: "But, then when you go to other schools, it feels weird 'cause like there's not so much people who are, not English, but Oriental. Somehow I feel that they're looking down on us." According to Hall (1991) identity is always established across difference: You are what they are not.

> Identity means, or connotes, the process of identification, of saying this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect. But something we have learnt from the whole discussion of identification...is the degree to which that structure of identification is always constructed through ambivalence. Always constructed through splitting. Splitting between that which one is, and that which is the Other. (p. 49)

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[10] Kelly (1998) explains that as part of current racialization processes in Canada, the term "ethnicity" has acquired new currency–"ethnicity is seen as a direct replacement for the term "race," one that fits more neatly with our modern liberal sensibilities" (p. 50).

And, through the splitting, comes the light. Adrena was learning more about who she was by meeting face to face who she was not (as did Kim, when she traveled to other schools). Darren, also not used to being in a minority position, found himself paying attention to his cultural identity in new ways:

> The cultural focus is stronger here as far as an awareness of your own culture. At other schools I've known, the majority of students were of European ancestry, whereas here most of our students have an Asian ancestry. So, that was a big change, coming out of situations where I was a majority, and coming into this setting and being a minority. It didn't bother me, as such–in fact, that was one of the things that attracted me to the school, because one of the tenets of my own personal philosophy is that every culture has something that we can learn from.

When asked about what it was like attending a multicultural school, many of the students also referred to some of the positive aspects:

> Hông: Well, you can learn about other people's culture and well like...there's lots of other people that are interesting, different kinds of people.
>
> Sarun: Neat, in a way that you meet other different types of people, you end up getting to know them.
>
> Roeun: You get to learn about other cultures, like have friends with different kind of people.
>
> Dith: It's cool seeing all the other different cultures– it's fun.
>
> Nouy: It's pretty good. Like you learn the other cultures and stuff. Like every year we have celebrations, like Cambodian New Year, and Chinese New Year.

Despite the advantages mentioned here of being exposed to other cultures, students at Coalfield School tended to form social networks with students from their own ethnic group. In this regard, Eckert's (1989, 2000) study of social categories and linguistic construction of identity in high school provides an interesting contrast to my study. Her study focuses on the role of the Jock and Burnout categories in the reproduction of adult social class. For linguistic reasons, Eckert's study was situated in White suburbia–she looked for ethnically homogenous communities, where class was the primary social variable. My site was just the opposite–ethnically diverse, with class a constant. Eckert found that students tended to affiliate with one category or the other, and that the opposition between the two was fundamental to the social order of the school.[11] Although a direct parallel cannot be made, the relations within and between ethnic (and, as we will see, gender) specific groupings were important to the social order in this C of P.

Shu explained that, "in my old school, like all groups play together, they mix together, but here they stick together, different cultures." This description appeared apt in many respects. The four Asian girls in the class were close friends; within the foursome, the two Vietnamese girls were best friends, as were the two Cambodian girls. Until Adrena's arrival, Carline was the only White girl in class–she appeared to get along well with the Asian girls. Darren attributed this to her having been around long enough: "She got along great with Nouy, Kim and Chanda and kind of hung out with them. She'd stayed a while, and so was slowly beginning to become one of the group." Adrena associated with Carline (somewhat) until she left in April. When another White student joined the class in May, Adrena was ecstatic: "I love it! There's another White female! God! There's all of two White females in the whole Grade 9 class." Apparently, the two girls with Aboriginal ancestry, gone by the time I began my research, hung out together. Although the boys tended to be less divisive than the girls, they tended to cluster along ethnic lines as well.

The Cambodian guys, with the addition of Hông, the sole Vietnamese boy in the class, formed the dominant group. Like the Cambodian boys, Hông was an 'oldtimer,' having been at Coalfield since kindergarten. Once again, Darren identified the time factor as important: "The Vietnamese and Cambodian communities mix quite nicely, no problems there, but again they're the students that have been here a long time. And I think that's more the crux of it rather than the cultural." Justin, both an 'oldtimer' and the only White boy in the class for much of the year, appeared to get along well with all the boys. In class, he usually sat next to Shu, the Chinese boy, who was not a member of the 'oldtimer' group. When Dylan, Justin's cousin, joined the class in February, Justin spent his time with him, and Shu was left on his own. Dylan, however, was often absent. On the few occasions that Craig, an Aboriginal student, attended class, he and Justin were very friendly. Outside of the language arts class, Shu associated with the two other Chinese boys (who were in the ESL class during language arts time). Because of the small number of students in the class (and school), there may have been more ethnic mixing than if the school had a larger population. For example, in her study of Black Canadian high school students, Kelly (1998) found that the size of the school as well as the number of Black students in an institution affects the degree of interaction between Black students and students of other ethnic groups.

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[11] Eckert (1989) notes that, in other schools, where ethnic and class boundaries coincide, ethnicity is apt to become the more salient issue in the Jock-Burnout split.

Some of the research participants offered their explanations as to why students clustered along ethnic lines. For example, Nouy explained that "they feel pretty comfortable sticking by their own culture because they know a lot about it, so I've seen a lot of people with the same language and culture stick together." Similarly, Darith told me that "people feel 'fine' with their own culture." When asked if there were any negative aspects associated with clustering, Sarun didn't think so: "Nobody ever complained to us or anything like that before." That someone would complain to Sarun may be unlikely, though, as he was of the dominant/oldtimer group. Some students did not perceive this type of social clustering as inherently problematic, and their views might be supported if the necessary information, knowledge, and opportunities can move across the boundaries. Whether this was happening is an ongoing theme in this work. Other students pointed to concerns associated with ethnic groupings. Hông, for example, suggests that "it's kind of like discriminating" and Kim reported that racism was sometimes a problem. Nouy suggests that first language use had the potential to be problematic: "Well, the bad thing is when they speak their own language, you can't really understand it and you don't know anything so you never know when they are talking about you or not." Although classroom members spoke various languages, the language that Nouy here refers to here is Khmer, the language spoken by the Cambodian students.[12] Issues involving the use of Khmer in particular had, from time to time, been regarded as problematic.

> Language is important here as a means by which access to networks is regulated: If you do not speak the right language, you do not have access

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[12] The students refer to the Khmer language as Cambodian.

> to forming relationships with certain people, or to participate in certain activities. (Heller, 1987, p. 181)

Interestingly, I had begun the research thinking about English as the 'right language' to speak in terms of having access to classroom practices. And, while English was the language of instruction, in some respects, not speaking Khmer limited students' access to both relationships and activities in the C of P. Within the school, conflicts of the most serious nature had occurred between Native and Cambodian students, and had involved using language to exclude. Within the C of P under study, this did not prove to be an issue; a possible explanation for this is that the Native students registered in the class attended so infrequently that I was not able to observe sustained interaction.[13] There had also been problems between Cambodian and Vietnamese students (contrary to Darren's comment above); in part, this can be attributed to lingering war-related tensions brought from countries of origin. The only way in which this played out in my study concerned dating, with a Vietnamese parent who did not want her child dating someone of Cambodian heritage.

The staff at Coalfield School had made various attempts to improve relations amongst the different ethnic groups in the school and to increase teacher understanding of students from diverse backgrounds. One of these initiatives was the Multicultural Leadership Class (see methodology chapter). Another way in which the school made a point of celebrating cultural differences as well as calling attention to some of the challenges inherent in culturally diverse schools was to host an annual assembly to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I had previously attended this event at Coalfield School. The year I had been involved with the Multicultural Leadership Class, the students had planned and performed skits to clarify cultural miscommunications; I had helped students with rehearsals. The year I conducted my research the event was co-sponsored by a race relations organization, a community development organization and the Department of Canadian Heritage. Many guests had been invited, including students from the nearby Catholic school. Greetings and remarks were given by representatives of the School Board, as well as members of the municipal, provincial and Canadian governments. The main events on the program (which was entitled STOP RACISM: ROLE OF YOUTH) included a keynote address, "The Power of Youth," a play on racism put on by the Multicultural Leadership Class, presentations of writing/poster contest winners, a dramatization, "Layers of Racism" performed by the President of Parent Advisory Committee, and a song performed by students. The following day an article highlighting the event-"Students given lesson in racism" appeared in the local newspaper.[14] The article began with an excerpt of one of the winning essays, written by a Grade 9 student who had been called names by a Native boy: chicken legs, White vanilla, White girl. The article then went on to discuss other instances of name-calling (in particular, between Native and Cambodian students) and what the school was doing to address the problem. I include these details to provide the background to a follow-up letter that appeared in the newspaper a number of days later. This letter will be used as a starting point to problematize some of the ways in which the inverted ethnic relations at Coalfield School were experienced, as well as to explore what kind of community of practice could open up better relations among individuals from within these diverse groupings.

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[13] This aspect of the school experience of Aboriginal students will be addressed later in the chapter, as will the problems associated with the use of languages other than English.

> **White girl will never undergo racial oppression**
>
> As a First Nations woman, I am disturbed by an article on racism which begins with an example of a White girl being called names by a Native boy.
>
> Furthermore, the "White girl," which I presume she is, on writing about this incident, received an award. ("Students given lesson in racism").
>
> What I see happening here is a redefinition or reinterpretation of the issue of racism by a "White" newspaper, and teachers, and a reporter, who are members of the dominant Western European society.
>
> As a scholar of dominant/minority relations, I believe racism is determined by relations of power, whether social, economic, or political, and the victim of racism is usually a member of the "minority" culture, or a "person of colour." The fact is that members of the dominant society will never know the pain and suffering that is inflicted on these groups.

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[14] Due to confidentiality concerns, the name of the newspaper has been omitted and names of those mentioned have been changed.

> For instance, Carlene will never experience the following forms of oppression because of her race.
>
> She will not be torn from her family and thrown into a residential school administered by members of an alien culture, or be torn from her family by child-welfare authorities who think they know what is best for her and have the power to do so.
>
> Nor will she be denied accommodation or employment because of her race.
>
> She will not be driven by the police to the outskirts of a city to freeze to death as is alleged to have happened to several Native men in Saskatoon.
>
> Her calls to 911 will not be ignored, as happened to a couple of Metis women, causing their death from domestic violence. I have not dealt with incidents of racism everyday racism encountered by Native people.
>
> Marilyn Watts, PhD

I am not a scholar of dominant/minority relations; however, I have thought long and hard on the topic. Having taught for many years in band-run schools housed in abandoned residential schools, I have some awareness as to the lingering negative effects of residential schooling. I have been witness to and angered by many of the ways in which Native students are stereotyped and shortchanged in the education system. At the same time, I observed with fascination the classroom dynamics when Native students were in the majority, with White students forming a very small minority. I learned much from my experiences as a 'minority' working on the reserve. Of course, while I was a minority in those contexts, I was still part of the 'dominant' society, and as such, did not know and likely will never know the pain and suffering to which Watts refers. However, this is not to say that I have never experienced racism. As for Carlene? I was not able to hear her response to the articles as she left the school shortly after this incident. I did have the opportunity to discuss the letter with other research participants, though. Adrena's response was that "Racism exists everywhere. I don't believe anybody should say that somebody doesn't undergo racism whether it be you're White, Asian, or Native." Darren told me that he

> was really saddened by this letter. The whole caption says 'White girl will never undergo racism' but she did in that situation. Was this girl at our school discriminated against? Yeah, she was. Are there other students

> that sometimes get discriminated against? Yeah, there are. We have to stop looking at one race as doing something to another race. All races play their role. And, all individuals play their roles in races, and we have to break it down, I think, more to what are you doing individually? We have to work to stop this one case at a time, and hope that they learn and teach, so hopefully in generations from now racism will be something that disappears.

Notice that while Darren recalls the caption as saying "White girl will never undergo racism," it actually read, "White girl will never undergo racial oppression." Perhaps I am splitting hairs, but I think this may be worth mentioning. Ryan (1999) explains that social scientists are not in agreement as to what racism actually is, nor on the manner in which it circulates: some consider racism to belong to the individual, manifesting itself in personality traits, attitude and behaviour, while others have looked at racism as a structural or institutional phenomenon.[15] Although Watts does refer to victims, her letter reflects an institutional view of racism, whereas Darren's outlook places emphasis on the individual and depoliticizes race; the varying approaches likely reflect the different ways they are positioned. Ryan's stance is that a more sensible view of racism is to see it both as an individual and as an institutional phenomenon–thus racist discourse and practice are first and foremost part of a social process, but individual subjects are also implicated. So, while the headline says White girl will never undergo racial oppression, perhaps it would not say White girl will never undergo racism.

Still, Watts' letter left me troubled. I agree that racism is determined by relations of power, and that the victim of racism is usually a member of the "minority" culture, or a "person of colour." In a twist from the usual, at Coalfield School, Carlene was a member of the "minority" culture. At the same time, she was a member of the dominant society. How to make sense of this set of circumstances? How to respond as an educator? Do you tell a child who is called names and excluded (on the basis of colour) that she hasn't experienced racism (because of her colour). I think not–but if Carlene is seen as simply a victim of racism, it will accomplish little in the long run. While my analysis has to take the broader societal context into consideration, the purpose of my research was to focus on the language arts class as a community of practice. This situation seems to suggest that a C of P is not only shaped by the larger society but that what one learns in it may have quite different ramifications if it 'inverses' societal ethnic relations.

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[15] See Ryan (1999, Chap. 4) for a more detailed explanation of contemporary racism.

This took me back to the headline of the article–"Students given lesson in racism." And, to Darren's point, that "we hope that they learn and teach, so hopefully in generations from now racism will be something that disappears." What had the students learned? Clearly, in addition to language arts, this C of P was 'teaching' race/ethnicity and relationships associated with them. Much of the literature I reviewed around race and racism focused on Black/White relations. "Although racism involves more than skin colour, it nevertheless revolves around the binary opposition of Black and White, or rather White and non-White" (Ryan, 1999, p. 86). What did this look like in my research site when examining relations between Cambodian and Native students, for example? Pon (2000) makes the point that, to understand present-day race and racism in Canada, it is important to move "beyond the paradigms of Black/White race relations and majority/minority cultures"(p. 149). This was particularly true of my research context in which Black/White relations were nonexistent, and customary majority/minority cultures were inverted. What had Adrena, for example, learned from her experience as a minority? The following exchange gives us an initial impression.

> Lynne: You've attended a lot of other schools. How is this school different in terms of the ethnic composition?
>
> Adrena: I find it really different, and also kind of hard. I'm not used to being around so many different cultures. I'm used to being the majority, not the minority, so I find it very difficult.
>
> Lynne: What do you find to be the most difficult part?
>
> Adrena: I used to be like some of the Cambodian guys thinking I was the best because I was the majority. Oh, God, did I get a kick in the butt when reality came and hit me.
>
> Lynne: In what way?
>
> Adrena: Well, when I first came here, none of them would come near me, and I was told by the White girl that was still here that the guys would not interact with me because I'm White. And we were at the Valentine's dance and I asked one of the Cambodian guys to dance. His excuse was, "you're too tall." I'm starting to think it's because I was White. And I think it's ridiculous, like, it's so immature and uncalled for.
>
> Lynne: That's interesting.

> Adrena: And, I even told them that reality is going to kick them in the butt once they hit high school. The minute you get into a high school you're going to be a minority, not a majority. If you make some comment, or you pick on the wrong White person, you're going to get your butt kicked.

Adrena has, in a sense, reduced her experience of exclusion to a binary opposition of minority/majority and White/non-White. The boys were unwilling to interact with her because she is White, *and* they were able to think they were the best because they were a majority. By singling out the 'Cambodian guys', Adrena is calling attention to the ethnic factor. Yet, in other ways she misses the nuances of 'culture,' attributing the boys' behaviour to immaturity, and a sense of superiority. She has 'learned' to her chagrin that all the world (or more specifically the boys in her class) does not see White girls as 'the best'–an important racial/ethnic lesson that many Whites in Canada can live a lifetime and not learn. Perhaps not surprisingly, she does not seem to appreciate this as a positive learning experience. We get some sense that she is actually eager for the 'real' structural racism of schools to come into play against these boys. When they get into high school, they will learn what the appropriate relations are between Whites and others. They will feel her discomfort in that setting and they will 'pay'. Is what she is learning in this C of P likely going to make her a 'better citizen' in a multi-cultural society? At this point in the story, at least, it does not appear likely. Would there be a way to 'work that out' so neither Adrena (in this context) nor the boys (in the subsequent context) need to experience such discomfort? How could the 'lesson in racism' be used to provide both White and Asian students (what about the others?) with a 'lesson in life' that could provide the Asian students with greater resilience in high school when they face similar situations and the White girl greater compassion in high school when she is on the other side?

My intention is to answer these questions by the end of the dissertation. For the moment, perhaps a helpful way to approach is with Kanno and Applebaum's (1995) comment, "Perhaps it is high time we discarded our romantic notion that if we put children of all ethnic/linguistic backgrounds in one place we will witness the development of true cross-cultural understanding" (p. 43). This speaks to the role of teachers and other educators in the process–obviously, putting them together is not enough. Initiatives such as the Multicultural Leadership Class were a step in the right direction. Students' and teachers' comments (from research done previously) suggest that the course was helping to create cross-cultural harmony in the school and encouraging students to respect cultural difference. However, it was an options course, and not all students made this choice. Adrena was a case in point. Furthermore, the course tended to utilise the "food and festivals" approach to multiculturalism, which has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and misconceptions. Some critics suggest that multiculturalism without anti-racism is not helpful. Later in the dissertation, I will discuss what happens when Emily attempts to engage the students in learning experiences of an anti-racist nature. It will be seen that, in this particular C of P, students were not ready/prepared for this. This anecdote will provide one of many examples of the way in which the ethnic composition of the class influenced classroom practices. In the next section, though, it will become clear that it is difficult to consider practices related to ethnicity without also thinking about gender.

‘Afraid We’ll Spit Poison’ (Is Gender the Story?)

> It is not surprising that the C of P perspective works so well to explain the construction and enactment of gender in (the) studies of adolescents.[16] This is precisely the kind of setting for which C of P was designed, in which learners or novices apprentice themselves to (or resist) the acquisition of gender and other norms–in short, education. (Bergvall, 1999, p. 279)

As I was working on this chapter, I read an article in *Maclean’s* magazine, “What’s a girl to do?” Asking if women know what their stereotypes are up to, Timson (2001) says that, when it comes to their futures, girls today have what she, her mother and her grandmother did not have–“a clear sense of entitlement and yet the most spectacular array of possibilities yet assembled, including role models who have made it past the tokenism gate” (p. 48). When compared to my mother and my grandmother, my opportunities do seem, in comparison, spectacular. Timson adds that, Rona Maynard, editor of *Chatelaine,* is convinced that gender is no longer the story. I could say that gender was never *my* story–an important part of my story, of course, but not *the* story.

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[16] Bergvall (1999) is referring to studies by Bucholtz and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet in the special issue, Communities of Practice in Language and Gender Research, of *Language and Society.*

Yet, in the midst of data analysis, I found myself having a strong reaction to the article. Gender had not been my research interest; the word was never mentioned in my candidacy proposal, nor in my master's thesis. Given my teaching and travel experiences, I was drawn more to issues of culture and ethnicity. I found myself identifying with to Haig-Brown's (1992) comments about her doctoral work in a First Nations context.

> I struggled intensely with the role that gender analysis would play in my work....Although gender issues are as significant to First Nations people as they are in all cultures, I did not systematically address gender issues throughout the study. In the face of the racism of the majority society, I found myself focusing more consistently on culture and ethnicity. (p. 112)

With this research project, though, it was clear early on that gender was, if not *the* story, a very significant part of the story nonetheless, and one that I could not overlook.[17] Stereotypes abounded. I understood Gallas's (1998) point that "when a teacher begins to look for the presence of gender dynamics in the classroom, they are found...everywhere" (p. 11). I noticed many gender divisions and differences–for example, boys and girls interacted only when pushed to by the teacher, and gender roles were quite strictly defined. In her study, Eckert (2000) found that the class-based categories of Jocks and Burnouts offered gender alternatives as well, embodying different ways of being male and of being female. In my study, ways of being male and of being female were inextricably intertwined with ethnicity, as will become evident in this section.

The self-imposed gender division was immediately obvious–initially, interaction between boys and girls was almost nonexistent. The physical setting of the class helped facilitate this separation. When I began my observations in the fall, the students' desks were arranged in twos and threes, with the girls on one side of the room and the boys on the other side. The Cambodian boys (plus Hông) were seated in the back of the boys' section (close to where I usually sat). Emily explained to me that students had chosen their own seating arrangements and that they did not necessarily sit in exactly the same place every day. While this proved to be true, there was little movement and then only *within* gender groupings. After the Christmas break, I arrived to find the desks had been rearranged in the shape of a horseshoe. Despite the different configuration, the students had managed to more or less remain where they were, with the girls on the left, the boys on the right, and the group of 'Cambodian' boys near the back, with the noticeable exception of Darith who was seated at the front and on girls' side. The following fieldnote excerpt suggests that having the teacher intervene in the seating plan may lead to more mixing between girls and boys.

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[17] I will revisit Timson's article later in the chapter.

Fieldnotes, January 10, 2000
When I asked about the new seating arrangements, Emily explained that she had made the changes more for her Grade 7 social studies class, but that she also preferred them for the Grade 9s, as she could see what everyone was doing more easily. The students had picked their own places, but she had assigned Darith's place, as a way of dealing with his 'overly social' nature. She said that, still, every chance he got, he was out of his desk and moving about. I had already noticed this–on several occasions he got out of his seat and went to talk to the group of boys at the back. However, I also noticed him speaking to Neary, the girl sitting next to him, a couple times. This struck me as particularly significant as it was the first time that I've actually noticed any girl-boy talk. This got me wondering as to how different classroom dynamics may be if there was a seating plan that mixed gender–would the girls and boys interact more?

Although I found this degree of separateness between girls and boys unusual for a Grade 9 class, to the students it *appeared* to be business as usual. What did they think about the gendered practices in the community? Curious, I broached this topic during the interviews. With issues related to ethnicity, I found that some classroom members were keenly aware, while others took these matters for granted, depending on how they were positioned. Gender proved to be a topic no one took for granted, although girls and boys responded in contrasting ways. Adrena, who had strong feelings about what she regarded as ethnic clustering, considered the gender divisions to be even more pronounced. When asked about cliques in the school, her immediate response was, "It's the guys and the girls." In some respects, gender did appear to take precedence over the social alliances based on ethnicity. Adrena described the class as "sexually orientated."

> In gym the guys stretch on half the gym, the girls have the other half. In class, the guys sit on one side of, the girls on the other. Like, it's so immature. God forbid you sit by a girl, that they're going to bite you!

Adrena was not the only girl who felt that the divisions were in some way imposed by the boys, as can be seen by the following comments:

> Kim: They're afraid we might spit poison at them! I don't know, they're afraid that if they get too close to us, their friends might make fun of them or something. We girls, I know we don't mind, but every time I try to talk to them, they always seem to be blushing.
>
> Nouy: I guess the guys are kind of shy and kind of embarrassed now that we're in junior high.

Several boys, in particular the oldtimers, acknowledged being shy and afraid around girls. The distance between the genders was, for the most part, generally attributed to adolescence.

> Hông: Well, we're kind of like at a sensitive age right now and our feelings can get mixed up. It's pretty confusing. So, we just hang out with our same gender.
>
> Darith: We're a different sex, so we're afraid to talk to each other. But *I* talk to girls.
>
> Roeun: Since junior high, we're too shy talk to each other.

Dith did not regard the gender separation as unusual: "I think it's normal 'cause I've been with these guys a long time and we've always been doing that–the girls sit there and the guys sit *here*. I don't know why. It's just normal." Shu, though, who had come to Coalfield School from another school, did not find the practice quite so ordinary. He laughingly called it sexism: "Like, all the girl sit in one corner of the class, and all the boys sit in another part of class. In my old school, girl and boy, they mix." Dylan, also new to Coalfield School, thought the situation "was kind of weird 'cause at all the other schools it's not really like that. Students mix, like everybody interacts with everybody. Girls usually mix with the guys." A partial explanation is likely the age factor, as mentioned above. Whereas Dith considered the separateness to be a long-standing practice, some students' comments suggested otherwise. Kim, for example, told me that

> when we were younger, we played with each other, like at recess we played frisbee. But, I don't know, somehow they've changed, puberty or something (giggles) since junior high 'cause before that they would talk to us, like if we needed help or anything.

Teachers, as well, considered maturity to account, at least partially, for the boys' behaviour. Emily explained: "Honestly, I don't think the guys are really into it yet…They're into cars, and video games, and working at A & W. That's where they are at this point." Lori had noticed that "it seems almost as if it could be the boys that are holding back. Like, the girls are willing to have a conversation, but the guys are too much wrapped up in themselves." And Darren's opinion was that "it's definitely the guys more than the girls. The girls really have no qualms. It's the guys, and I think maybe it's just an extension of the maturity level. I remember being that age."

Perhaps I should not have been so surprised by the way the girls and boys were so seemingly self-segregated. As a teacher, naturally I was used to gender divisions and differences. The literature confirms that this is not unusual. Schools have their own distinctive patterns of organization, which can be quite different from those found in peer groups outside the school (Romaine, 1999). For example, in her study of children in a working-class area of London (a mix of White and Black children), Wulff (1988) found that girls and boys interacted in the neighborhood in a group mixed by both age and ethnicity. In school, however, the same children divided into groups separated primarily by gender, and to a lesser extent by race or ethnicity. According to Romaine, nearly all studies of children in school from kindergarten to high school show a pattern of self-chosen gender segregation, with many finding an increase in gender separation peaking in early adolescence. When researchers have looked at children outside school, they have found more evidence of gender mixing. In Thorne's (1994) study, the children she observed commented that they had friends of the opposite gender outside school, but they either ignored them or were ignored by them at school in order to avoid being teased.

Some similarities can be noted with the students in my research site. Several of the students mentioned that they had more contact with the opposite gender out of school, and that (in school) they were concerned about rumours.

> Dith: Outside of school, people are more together. And, Darith and Kim are like together now. So, they call each other and stuff like that. They go out. They don't mind doing, you know, stuff together.
>
> Roeun: Outside of school, Dith and Darith, they talk to girls...but when they come to school they don't because people start talking about their reputation.
>
> Nouy: We don't talk a lot to each other at school, because if a guy sits beside a girl they would say something about him, like rumours, like he likes her and she likes him (little laugh).

Emily reports being surprised to learn that the boys and girls had contact outside of school, as she had been "floored the first time she heard a boy talk to a girl. And, then to find out that they actually do a lot of communicating over the phone, and doing things with each other outside of school, yet the classroom climate is so different."

If such self-imposed gender segregation was not unusual, was I paying undue attention? Certain data suggest that I was not. For instance, the *degree* of segregation for their age seemed unusual to me. Lori, the student teacher, had noticed this as well: "Not that all kids that age are dating, but I mean it's just that usually they talk back and forth, and they harass one another. But, these kids don't even talk to each other; they just ignore one another." She speculated as to a possible explanation:

> I think that's probably a cultural thing, that they're different, totally separate. But it's also interesting because even though if it is a cultural thing they're still at that age where they'd want to start mixing, you know, so I find it amusing that they're so separate.

In addition to the maturity factor, Darren thought that the gender divisions were "even more pronounced with these guys because of culture–you know, with the men/ women division in their culture." Barry, who taught the Grade 9 students math, told me that while he had very little comparative teaching experience, he found that

> there was certainly less interaction than I expected, and I've had trouble quite a few times with trying to have boys work with girls. I've certainly had people refuse...It seems likely to me that it's a culture that tends to segregate boys and girls, but I don't know. I've certainly never observed them in their Native culture.

Neither had I. I asked Lee, the school's community coordinator, for an insider's perspective.

> I guess you've got to understand where we're coming from, too. In our culture, we're taught not to have any kind of love relationship with the opposite gender, so it's sort of like a taboo thing. We have to respect ourselves first, whereas the western society is more loose. So, that's why they have boys and girls working together, and that's why you have so many problems with teen pregnancy. And, students don't perform well in the school because they get involved too much with this so-called boyfriend and girlfriend relationship. I think that's our parents' belief, and we're taught that way, that we shouldn't mingle together when we're so young.

Lee's comment contains some broad generalizations as to girl-boy relationships in western society that could be problematized. However, he does offer at least a partial explanation for the divisions, confirming the teachers' hypotheses (keeping in mind that generalizing is at work here as well). This C of P was heavily shaped by pre-existing social groupings with specific gender relationships. We will see that the lack of girl-boy contact was not serving the boys too well when it came to academic success, though.

One of the ways in which this lack of contact between girls and boys played out in the classroom was that much of the harassment typical of junior high age students was absent in this class. Blair (1996), for example, conducted her doctoral study in a Canadian urban Grade 8 classroom. She describes observing both verbal and physical conflict between girls and boys. When she explored this further, it became clear that the girls felt bullied and intimidated by the boys-they were being verbally, physically and sexually harassed. Having taught in junior high classes, I was familiar with the scenarios Blair describes, noticeably absent from my research site. Emily, too, found Coalfield School to be different than the other schools in which she had taught where "definitely, there would be sexual harassment happening. Here, there's some level of respect for the opposite sex." The absence of harassment was a positive culture-related practice in the C of P. 'Girls only' schools are developing as one solution to problematic interaction between boys and girls of this age–this C of P had created that without having separate schools. Unlike the lack of harassment, though, some of the cultural expectations surrounding gender were not as easy to see in a positive light.

Various (other) gendered practices accompanied the aforementioned gender divisions in the Grade 9 classroom. Gender roles, in particular, appeared to be quite strictly defined. The manner in which gender intersected with culture/ethnicity influenced many of the practices in the classroom and, in turn, played a role in who learned what. One of the ways in which this was apparent concerned the different ways girls and boys approached their schoolwork. The general practice in this class was that the girls would complete assignments, whereas the boys would not. The girls tended to use class time more efficiently, while the boys were more likely to fool around in class. The boys would then have homework, and, more often than not, this would not be completed either. Both boys and girls talked amongst themselves in class–girls' talk was often related to work; boys' talk was usually more social in nature. The following interview comments support my observations of the typical gendered practices regarding schoolwork:

> Emily: The girls definitely work harder, take more pride in their work. I think the boys generally just do it to get it done, whereas the girls take the time to put in the effort.
>
> Darith: The girls try much harder than the boys. School is *really* important to them.
>
> Dith: Girls want to get their work done, but the guys they don't want to work. They just want to fool around, waste time.
>
> Kim: The guys are smart, but they just don't try. I guess 'cause to them it probably seems uncool to be doing homework.

When asked, "Is school important to you? Why/why not?", girls' and boys' responses were similar. During the interviews, all students reported that they considered education to be important–for their future career, for getting a good job, for getting into university, for making it far in life.

> Chanda: Ya, because we get a better education. If you get a better education, in the future you might get a better future.
>
> Nouy: Ya, 'cause when I get out, I want to like have a job, a career in my life.
>
> Dith: Yes. I need it for my work, my future.
>
> Shu: Ya, I think it's very important 'cause then you get a better job in the future.

The students, at some level at least, all seem to have accepted the line that "if you work hard in school, you get a good life." For some of them, though, the rhetoric did not seem to translate into practice. For example, Roeun's response to the question was: "yup, 'cause if I don't get anywhere in school, I won't get anywhere in life. That's how school works." At the same time, he told me that he only works hard when he has to, which is "when I'm way behind in my homework, and failing big time." He reported that this happens often. Darith told me that "Ya, school's important. I want to get a good job in the future, but I get lazy, too." Sarun also acknowledged that he was "sometimes lazy. I don't get my work done. Most of the time, I like to fool around." Yet, when asked if school was important, he responded emphatically: "Of course! It should be to everybody. Without an education, you're not going to make it far in life."[18] I could not help but notice some contradictions between what the boys were telling me and what they were doing in terms of their schoolwork.

I looked to the literature as to possible explanations for why the boys' statements and their behaviour did not match. Some parallels can be drawn to Martino's (2000) research with adolescent boys in an Australian high school. Martino shows how boys fashion particular versions of masculinity for themselves through specific social practices such as "mucking around" in class, "giving crap," and acting "cool." I have included examples above of what Martino refers to as "mucking around" in class. As for "giving crap" and acting "cool", Sarun came closest to meeting these requirements. Emily gives her view of his social standing in class: "He's cool; he's the man." This theme will be furthered later in the chapter; for now, suffice it to say that 'rebel' behaviour was minimal in this class. Neither did I get the sense that their lack of engagement with school was an active resistance as it was in Willis's (1977) study of working class boys in Great Britain. Martino draws a parallel to Willis's study, noting that, for the boys in his study who were of middle class background, rejection of school could not be tied to a working-class location. In terms of class, the boys in my study were a closer match to those in Willis's study; however, I did not get the sense that they were actively resistant or rejecting school in a similar manner.

Still puzzled, I raised the topic with Darren during the interview. His view was that the boys did not care about school, at least "not to the same degree the girls do."

> For the Asian girls, education is a huge tool for them. It gives them an even footing with the guys from their cultural background. Also, as being educated, it may even put them on a higher platform, in a way, than the guys. It's a chance to beat the guys, and get ahead of them. The guys just see it as something that has to be done. They don't see education as a chance of opening doors for them, whereas I think the girls understand that a little better, that it's a chance to open doors.

Why didn't the boys see education as a chance of opening doors for them? I considered Hubbard's (1999) study concerning gendered strategies for success among low-income African American high school students. In his study, the girls tended to focus on academics, while the boys were more interested in sports. Hubbard found that while the males pursued athletics as the key to a secure future, the African American females in the study relied on academics and peer support. The females worried about the economic dilemmas they would face if they did not get a higher education. This corresponds with what Darren had to say about education being a tool for the Asian girls. As for the boys in my study, most of them highlighted the importance of sports; however, I saw no evidence that they equated athletics with future security.

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[18] As will be shown, there were some doubts as to whether these boys would make it far in life.

The topic of sports did elicit comments of interest, though. While teachers were inclined to attribute differing gendered practices to ethno-cultural factors, some students were of the opinion that teachers treated boys and girls differently.

> Emily: The gender differences are culturally based. It's the home influence.
>
> Kim: The guys mostly get credit for sports. Girls they get credit more for schoolwork.
>
> Dith: Teachers trust the girls more 'cause they work. The guys usually fool around more so the teachers don't trust us (laughs). But in sports, usually the guys are the leaders or the captains of the teams, things like that...'cause the girls are quiet. They don't say anything, they're shy.

Clearly the teacher and the students explain these practices in different ways. What are possible explanations for the different discourses? Which came first? Were the students behaving according to teachers' praise, or were the teachers simply responding to the respective practices of boys and girls? Likely, both were correct, and student and teacher practices had developed in a cyclical manner. When I raised this issue with Darren during the interview, he was quite adamant that

> it could be perceived that way, but it's not what's happening. I can understand that perception because we do have a high level of male involvement in sports, whereas we don't have a high level of female involvement. One of the things that we've been trying to work on is to get the girls more involved in sports.

I asked Darren if he thought the reason for the girls' low involvement in sports was also related to culture:

> Some of it comes down to that–just the fact that girls are supposed to be at home, taking care of what needs to be done there. It's a killer to try and

> get the girls to play sometimes, as they get shy and embarrassed when the guys come and watch them play. Again, this goes back to them being the first generation here. That's what we're working on.

The excerpt below is a continuation of my conversation with Kim, who had made the comment about what guys and girls respectively get credit for:

> Lynne: Why do you think that's the case? (re: credit)
>
> Kim: I guess 'cause to the guys sports is more fun than schoolwork.
>
> Lynne: What about the girls?
>
> Kim: I don't know, for some of us I guess we like sports more, but then, it's because we're girls. *(laughs)* Well, my mom always taught me, 'cause like you're a girl, so you're supposed to do this and that.
>
> Lynne: What's the 'this and that'?
>
> Kim: She told me, family first, then schoolwork, don't talk to my friends a lot, listen, do my homework.

In an earlier interview, Kim told me that she

> used to be on the badminton team, but then it just got in the way. It's over now. My Mom really got mad, too, because I came home late. She doesn't like it when I come home late, because I wouldn't be finished my chores. (laughs) I sweep and mop, see if my mom needs help with anything. And, I do at least an hour homework.

Although I had been expecting a comment about teachers' practices, Kim's response tended to corroborate the comments made by Darren and Dith. In addition to being shaped by pre-existing social groupings, this C of P was also strongly influenced by home-based gender expectations. This raises the question as to the teachers' role in either maintaining or interrupting practices grounded in cultural values[19].

According to (at least two of) the teachers, cultural views can also provide a possible explanation as to why the boys did not "see education as a chance of opening doors." Apparently, they believed that the girls needed more education because they were not as smart as the boys. Emily told me that "their perception is that girls just aren't as smart. One of the boys informed me that the girls need their education, because they have to try and smarten up to get as smart as a man. The boys already have smarts, so they'll be fine-they'll just work and make money." My first response when I heard this comment was that the boy speaking to Emily could not have been serious. Unfortunately, I was unable to pursue these particular comments with the boys, as the student interviews were over by the time I interviewed the teachers. Darren, who had frequently discussed gender issues with these students, offered his opinion as to the origins of this stance:

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[19] I will return to this question in Chapter 5.

> I've talked to them lots over the two years about it (gender issues), but one of the things that comes out sometimes is this sort of thing: "You're a wimp if your boss is a woman." And then they always say, "Well, not you, Mr. W." I mean, they are what they've been brought up on....Their parents come from a cultural background that says that men are the chiefs, the heads of the family, and they're the ones with the brains. The woman does the work at home, and she should be quiet. You can't defeat what your parents have taught you.

How did these views manifest themselves in the C of P? The following anecdote provides an example. In the fall, two student teachers were placed with Emily for a four week field experience: a female, Sally, who was responsible for teaching lessons in science, and a male, Ross, whose assignment was to teach social studies. Sally told me that when she was teaching science, some of the boys would tell Ross, who was observing at the time, that they needed a 'guy' teacher. Given these comments, one wonders to what extent this C of P is shaped not only by the gender relations of the students but the gender of the teacher. If the class had been taught by a man, would I have seen anything different in these boys? While I did not observe these students with a male teacher, these and other data (to follow) suggest that the gender of the teacher likely influenced relations with students more so than is usual.

In this regard, too, my site can be compared to Blair's (1996) study. Blair explains that in her study "the Grade 8 teacher believed that these conflicts had been affecting the overall classroom dynamics and classroom learning and had reached a point where it affected her interaction with the students as well. She, too, felt bullied and threatened by some of the boys. "This classroom was not a safe place" (p. 95). Unlike the class in which Blair observed, my research site could be considered a safe place, particularly in terms of issues related to sexual harassment. This is not to say that gender issues did not affect student-teacher interaction, though, as well as classroom dynamics and learning. Emily felt she faced certain challenges with the Asian boys because she was female. Although a detailed exploration of these dynamics is beyond the scope of my study, Wang's (2000) research which explores Asian and White high school boys' discussions about masculinity in the context of their gender culture, and "race" is pertinent.[20] Wang makes the point that research has shown that schools serve as one major site for producing and transmitting dominant notions of masculinity. The boys in my study provide a potent example that "masculinities associated with class, ethnic and sexual groupings…intersect with the dominant discourse of schooling" (Kenway, 1995, p. 63).

To illustrate this, I provide the details of an incident that had happened at the beginning of the school term. Emily had mentioned the incident early in the research and the topic resurfaced during the interview. At a school picnic at the end of the previous year, Darith had soaked her with a water gun. At the time she told him, "you know, payback's going to be ten times worse. You just better watch your back." Emily waited for "the perfect opportunity" and found it in September, when the school went to Woodring Lake for the day.[21]

> …I'd made this turtle out of sand, and I thought, okay, that's going to be my catch. And I got all the teachers to come down and see the turtle. So, they did and the kids did, too…then I threw him over my shoulder and walked out into the water about a good maybe 30, 40 meters, and just dropped him down in the water gently. The lake wasn't deep, or anything, so no fear of him getting hurt.

Emily, who considered this to be an appropriate payback, and was not prepared for Darith's reaction:

> At first, he was in shock, like "what are you doing?" Then he picked up sand and started throwing it at me. He was very mad. And, so I'm yelling at him, joking, "well, you know, if you're going to give it, you've got to be able to take it, this type of thing." So, then he went in, and all the other boys were waiting for him when he got out of the water, shocked, and they surrounded him, they were very protective of him. And, they didn't talk to me for about two weeks. They had nothing to say to me.

Emily interpreted Darith's reaction as cultural:

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[20] Wang (2000) uses the term "race," in quotation marks, to indicate the racist roots of the notion of *race*.

[21] The name of the lake has been changed.

> In my culture, you know, like, big deal, but I think in their culture, for a girl to do that to a boy was just unthinkable. Like, how could you! Eventually, some humour came into it, and he came around, but at the beginning of the year I thought, "oh, this is going to be a *long* year." At first, the boys just totally protected him. Like they even walked in a circle around him to the bathroom.

According to Emily's interpretation, her behaviour had violated accepted practices for a female in the home culture of these boys. Emily's experience suggests "new ways of reading boys' notions of masculinity are…needed" (Wang, 2000, p. 123). How did this occurrence affect classroom dynamics over the remainder of the school year? Were the teachers 'correct' in their explanations as to the discrepancy between the boys' discourse about the importance of education and their practices toward their schoolwork? As with the ethnic clustering we saw in the previous section, gender separation need not be seen as intrinsically problematic; were certain gendered practices in this class interfering with students' learning, though? How could these students be scaffolded to a place of greater 'integration?' These and other questions will be considered, if not answered, in the remainder of the dissertation. As we will see in the next section, this incident was not the only example of the role culture played in making the school year a *long* one in some respects for Emily, and perhaps, for the students as well.

Discourse Practices

> The C of P is one way of focusing on what members do: the practice or activities that indicate that they belong to the group, and the extent to which they belong. The practice or activities typically involve many aspects of behavior, including global or specific aspects of language structure, discourse and interaction patterns. (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999, p. 175)

In the first section of this chapter I began to describe the 'practices' at work in this Grade 9 classroom, specifically social practices. I presented ways in which ethnicity and gender influenced these practices and tentatively suggested that particular practices worked to disadvantage students in terms of the community's shared purpose–the successful completion of Grade 9 language arts. In this section I further this theme through an examination of the discourse practices in the classroom, in particular, the oral discursive practices. As Toohey (2000) explains, "Examining how…discourse practices are organized allows a somewhat different perspective on how classroom practices enable certain social relations and ultimately learning" (p. 98).

According to Cazden (1988), three features of educational institutions make communication so central: 1) spoken language is the medium by which much teaching takes place, and in which students demonstrate to teachers much of what they have learned; 2) in classrooms (unlike other places), one person, the teacher, is responsible for controlling the talk while class is in session; and, 3) spoken language is an important part of the identities of all the participants. The task for both teachers and researchers is to make the usually transparent medium of classroom discourse the object of focal attention.

I begin the section with what I came to think of as the "like pulling teeth" mystery. I describe my fixation with what I considered to be an absence of classroom dialogue and explain how I was not able to understand the oral discourse practices in the C of P until I let go of what I was expecting to see. In the second part I revisit the data, 'enlightened' by the literature to pursue a line of inquiry–acquiring academic discourse–more pertinent to my actual, not imagined, research site. In the conclusion to this section I return to the 'mystery' to address questions, concerns and possibilities. This part takes the form of a conversation with myself. This section purposely presents an incomplete representation as to the discourse practices in the classroom. In Chapter 5, I provide a more thorough examination of classroom discourse, in the form of a section on organizing instructional discourse.

'Like Pulling Teeth' (Solving the Discussion Mystery)

> As a White, middle and high school reading and English teacher, I valued discussion as a way for students to validate their personal knowledge and to share their diverse backgrounds and knowledge with one another. I also valued discussion as a way to stimulate thinking about the texts from multiple perspectives. The discussions I valued most were those in which the students followed certain rules such as contributing to group discussions in an orderly way, talking one at a time, listening to others, and staying focused on the topic. (Young, 1998, p. 247)

Like Young, I valued classroom discussions. Unlike Young, I had not clearly articulated for myself what discussions I valued most. Over the course of the research project, however, I came to realize that I had a strong preference towards teacher-whole class discussions. I chose to conduct my research project in a language arts classroom as I considered it to be a subject area that provides numerous and varied opportunities for the intersection of language and social interaction. I began the research project anticipating a discussion-filled class in which students from culturally diverse backgrounds talked about texts and debated issues of consequence. Needless to say, I was relieved when, during my initial meeting with Emily, I was told that she was very interested in classroom dialogue and enjoyed using discussions as a teaching strategy. However, she added that "getting these students to talk was like pulling teeth." For reasons that will become clear, I paid little attention to this comment and began participant observation taking for granted that there would be discussions–after all, that is what went on in language arts classes. Wasn't it? Not surprisingly, then, I was both disappointed and concerned when, early on in the research, there were no classroom discussions to observe. I was puzzled, and as time passed became somewhat preoccupied by, this absence, as can be seen in the following journal reflection, written after the completion of the fieldwork.

Journal reflection, July 24, 2000
As I read over my fieldnotes, I can see that, from the beginning of the project, the lack of classroom discussion was an issue for me. It was like a mystery that I wanted to solve–why a teacher who claimed to love class discussions rarely initiated any. At the same time, I was a poor detective, so to speak–missing clues and, in the end, stumbling on the solution by chance.

Thus begins the twofold mystery-why Emily rarely initiated any discussion and why I was so concerned that she *should.*

By way of illustration, I will briefly describe some of what went on in class during a novel study that began shortly after I began participant observation. The students began reading Steinbeck's, *The Pearl* (1947/1989). I was eager, assuming that discussions would accompany the teaching of the novel. Rather, the following summarizes the manner in which the novel study was taught. With each class, a chapter was assigned for silent reading. If the students did not finish the chapter in class, they were to finish it for homework. The next class would begin with a quiz. I was observing the day the class had the quiz on Chapter 1. There were twelve quiz questions which Emily asked orally and to which the students responded in writing. Except for one clarification question, the students quietly referred to the photocopied chapter during the quiz. When they were finished, Emily collected their papers and passed them out again to other students for marking. Emily told the students what the acceptable answers were and how many marks each answer was worth. Other than a couple requests for the answer to be repeated, there was no student input. When the marking was completed, the students gave the papers back to their owners, and proceeded with the reading of the next chapter. In my opinion, there were several opportune points of entry for discussion and I wondered why Emily did not take advantage of these moments. The following journal entry reflects my thinking at the time:

Journal reflection, November 9, 1999

As I listened to the lesson, many thoughts/questions went through my mind. I couldn't help questioning some of the questions Emily was asking, especially when they had only read one chapter (and on their own). Of course, I'm sure she has an agenda for doing it this way, but I would have wanted to discuss the chapter with the students. I was also surprised that Emily just gave the answers and told them how to mark (e.g. 1 mark if they have this, 2 marks if they have that). I wondered why she did not ask for any student input on the answers. One of the answers was that Indians were too poor to pay for a doctor and another was that Indians had been beaten, robbed, starved, despised and frightened by the doctor's race for 400 years–this said with absolutely no comment/discussion whatsoever. I think I would have had difficulty just leaving it at that–for me, this is something to talk about. Will the discussion be coming at another time? I wonder. Perhaps it's too easy to be in the position of observer/judge, though. I don't know what I would do if I was the teacher. Plus, I've only observed a few times–it's not fair to base anything yet.

This pattern of readings followed by quizzes continued, more or less, over the course of the novel study. In addition, students responded to select questions in paragraph form. I began to be concerned as the purpose of my study was to examine student-student and student-teacher interaction–I wondered if the Language Arts class would, at some point, be more interactive. On a visit not long after this, Emily let me know before class began that

> they're not going to be doing anything exciting today–just reading their novels. I know you're interested in language, but maybe it would be better if you came to the science class as it's more hands on and interactive. They're never just sitting reading.

What I wanted to know was *why* they were "just sitting reading" in the language arts class. I did take Emily up on her offer to visit the science class, though, and this will be discussed later. My preoccupation with the lack of class discussion continued. Before class one morning, I broached the topic with Emily by asking if there would be any discussions. She explained that yes, *The Pearl* was about choices and that they would be discussing this–first they had to read the novel, though. I did not see why it was necessary to wait until reading was completed; nonetheless, I waited for the discussions, which never came. In my fieldnotes for Nov. 26th I have written: "They are on Chapter 5–there are six chapters, so maybe they'll be on to some discussion soon. Let's hope."

On my next visit, though, I found out that they had finished the novel and were working on related projects. As I had not observed every class, I asked Emily if they had discussed *The Pearl* in class yet. She said "No, but they will be." This surprised me, as they were already finished the novel. The next time I visited the Language Arts class was the following Monday. The class was devoted to the completion of novel projects. The final quiz had been on Friday. Had there been any discussion? Wouldn't the time to discuss the novel be before doing these projects and before the quiz? When I asked Emily, I was told that they had discussed the book briefly on Friday, but that the students had been very reluctant to do so, in particular the boys. She added that that was one of the reasons she really likes to read their writing. I was disappointed that I had missed what little discussion there had been on the novel; however, I thought I should have a look at the students' writing. Emily gave me a set of paragraphs, written at the end of Chapter 5, to read. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

Fieldnotes, December 6, 1999

The assignment had been, "What would you tell Kino to do with the pearl?" Reading the paragraphs, I separated them into two groups. Four students think that Kino should keep the pearl, sell it and benefit from the money, in particular to educate his son (Justin, Noah, Kim, Roeun). Ten students, the majority, think Kino should get rid of the pearl as it has brought evil and bad luck. I wrote out a couple examples to show contrasting viewpoints.[22] *Kim would tell Kino that:*

> *it's time for his people to break through the steel cage and roam free like real human beings. Think of Coyotit's future–would he want him to grow up and become a fisherman living off corncakes everyday, wearing rags as clothes and having no education. And Uana, it's about time she got a chance to not wake up early in the morning to cook, it's time she got paid off for all her hard work.*
>
> *Nouy, on the other hand, said that*

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[22] The authors of these paragraphs, Kim and Nouy, were two of the three top students.

> *he shouldn't give up his old world, where he first grew up and learn the true meaning of peace, where his friends and family members grew up for generations. I would ask him if he would rather give up his friends and family members back in the old world or would he rather be rich and be disliked by everyone else who is poor.*

I see these contrasting viewpoints as a great place for a debate. I was imagining that persuasion kind of debate that I took part in at one of the sessions offered through University Teaching Services.

It is with chagrin, but not surprise, that I now read this final comment from my fieldnotes–I had obviously read the paragraphs through my discussion lens. And, although I did observe some student-student interaction with the novel projects, my bewilderment with the absence of discussion, which had taken the shape of a mystery, continued.

I turned to the literature to help me solve the mystery and learned that school talk generally follows the IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) sequence, a prominent social interactional construct that emerged from the research on classroom discussions (Mehan, 1979). Erickson (1996) has summed up this structure as a "known-information question initiated by the teacher, followed by a response by a student, followed in turn by evaluation of the response by the teacher" (p. 31). As I read the literature on classroom discourse, IRE (also termed recitation sequence) certainly did take center stage. Studies show that recitation is by far the predominant mode of classroom discourse (Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 1993) and Cazden (1988) has described IRE as the default pattern of classroom discourse–doing what comes naturally, at least to teachers. However, if IRE was doing what comes naturally to teachers, then Emily was an exception. Rather, the typical practice in the language arts classroom was for Emily to give brief instructions at the beginning of class as to the lesson for the day; and then to ask, "Any questions?" Very seldom were any questions asked. She then would tell the students to get started. Individual students may approach her desk to ask a question during the class, but public questions were few. Observers are critical of recitation because it offers students limited possibilities for meaning-making and permits students little access to the floor (Toohey & Day, 1999). On the surface, the absence of IRE sequences could be seen as positive.

However, from what I could ascertain, neither were the students in Emily's class getting much access to 'the floor.'

I remained baffled. IRE sequences are associated, in particular, with teacher-directed classroom discussions (Hicks, 1996). In this respect as well, I had difficulty situating Emily in the literature. Although I had been unable to thoroughly examine her approach to classroom discussion, I would not describe Emily's manner as authoritarian nor her approach as teacher-directed. There appeared to be a contradiction between her way of being and her classroom discourse practices. She had a good sense of humour and she appeared to have good relationships with her students. She joked with the students a lot. When I say that dialogue was minimal, I do not mean to suggest that very little 'talk' occurred in the language arts class. There was 'teacher talk' (giving instructions, making jokes, reprimanding and reminding) and there was 'student talk' (both social and work-related). Rather, there was very little student-teacher dialogue, and almost no teacher-whole class discussions. Over the course of the year, Emily organized classroom instruction in a variety of ways, including small-group format (which will be discussed in the next chapter). However, I never let go of my preoccupation with the lack of class discussions. With each new unit, I found fertile ground for discussions. Yet, each opening became, in my opinion, a missed opportunity. At the time, I considered this absence be one more 'crack' in my already flawed research project. As it turned out, this led to light getting in.

The school year was almost over, though, before what had puzzled me about Emily and classroom discussions came clear, before *the light got in.* Over the course of the research, from time to time I attempted to raise the topic of class discussions. With other topics to talk about as well, there never seemed to be enough time. I was determined to pursue this during our scheduled interview near the end of the school year. I reminded Emily of our first conversation when she said that while she liked discussions, "With these students, it's like pulling teeth." Emily's response surprised me:

> Yeah, it sort of turns you off from wanting to start any group discussion for fear of standing up there going, "all right, you know, somebody say something." And, I think that that's where I notice I've changed as a teacher from Errington School to here, you know, where we'd get discussions going, and it would be really fun. Here, I do more of just

> avoiding the whole issue, although discussion is something, you know, that probably should be practiced more. It's just because it's like pulling teeth.

I recall being taken aback by Emily's revelation–how, at the time, it struck me as *so* significant. In terms of the 'crack/light' metaphor, it seemed more like a lightening bolt than a shaft of light illuminating the darkness. I have taken the time to describe this so-called 'solving of a mystery' as, for me, the narrative represents perhaps the most noteworthy of my research *stumblings*; at the same time it led to the brightest *insights* (see Chapter 1). The solution made perfect sense; actually, it was obvious (at least, in retrospect). Why had I not been able to see this, rather than to consider Emily's words and her teaching behavior contradictory? After all, Emily did tell me that "getting these students to talk was like pulling teeth." With the benefit of hindsight, I can point to several reasons why I did not pay adequate attention to Emily's comment. To begin with, although Emily had not made this explicit, I had assumed that there was a cultural explanation for her remark. I likened this to my teaching experiences with Native students (who were often described as 'silent'). I explained in Chapter 2 how this description did not match my experiences with Native children. I likely assumed Emily was stereotyping Asian students in a similar way.[23] Second, as time passed, I did not have adequate 'proof' that "getting these students to talk was like pulling teeth." This was because there were so few discussions, so it was very difficult for me to form an opinion. Finally, Emily had told me that she liked to use discussions in her teaching. Because of this (and perhaps because I, too, have a preference for this style of teaching), I think I expected her to teach this way despite her 'like pulling teeth' remark.

This explains my thinking at the time. What about Emily? Why had she found that getting these students to talk was 'like pulling teeth?' Her opinion was that "it's probably mostly culture because with talking to Lee, he says that they're taught to respect their elders, and that you don't talk, you don't ask questions. Yet in my culture it's the opposite; you need to ask questions." As I did when I was grappling with the gender issues, I posed the 'like pulling teeth' issue to Lee.

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[23] "Applied to race and ethnic relations, stereotypes refer to a shared consensus regarding the generalized attributes of others with respect to perceived physical or cultural characteristics" (Elliot and Fleras, 1992, p. 335).

> I think it's also a cultural factor. Go back to what we talked about before–boy and girl relationships. This is another belief about how the students should behave when they're in the classroom setting. They should take orders from their teachers. They're not supposed to talk back, or to voice their opinions–teachers are superiors, you know. We cannot say, okay, we'll discuss this, to express our opinions. Even to our parents, we're not supposed to talk back, and I guess they brought that belief with them from their country. So, it's a very new thing for Asian kids.

I realized that I had to rethink my resistance to the suggestion that there may be a connection between the cultural background of the students and their reluctance to engage in classroom discussions. In their article, *Quiet students across cultures and contexts,* Townsend and Fu (1998) note that "many studies of the learning patterns of minority students have shown that quietness and withdrawal are typical of Asian students" (p. 9).[24] In my preoccupation with what the teacher was/was not doing, I lost sight (to a degree) of my focus on the classroom as a community of practice. In the previous section we saw how particular social practices had been shaped by the C of P. The classroom composition with its majority of Asian students played a role in this regard, and was instrumental in influencing oral discursive practices as well. Had the Asian students been in a minority position, they may have been recognized as the silent ESL student, commonly found in the literature. And, Adrena, who told me that "nobody speaks up, and they laugh when I do", would have been doing what is expected in school settings, rather than being the 'different' one. There was a reasonable explanation as to why Emily, who liked using discussions as a teaching strategy and who acknowledged their importance, had come to avoid this common practice with her students? She found herself facing a sub-community within the C of P that had been in progress for a number of years before her arrival and she had difficulty disrupting it. Discovering how Emily's teaching practice had been shaped by the C of P reminded me how a C of P analysis could contribute to my understanding of what was going on in the classroom.

That the larger school C of P was implicated as well can be confirmed in that Emily was not the only teacher who struggled with getting the students to talk. In the interview with the principal, I explained the 'like pulling teeth' mystery. Ruth told me that she had found the same challenges that Emily referred to.

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[24] See for example, Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, 1991; Trueba, 1990.

> One year I taught a complementary course in the ethics strand, and so the students would know what the expectation was, we called it *Hot Topics*. And, it was quite painful, because I never was successful in getting a discussion going. It just fizzled. And it really was very difficult.

The oral discourse practices of the majority of the students shaped what happened in the class and had an effect on student-student as well as student-teacher interaction. Ruth felt that the Asian students' reluctance to speak up in class had the potential to increase cultural differences between students. She explained that

> in some ways that class increased, perhaps, the cultural differences because you would have Caucasian and some Aboriginal students who would quite freely express their perspectives. And, the Asian students would not. And so they may agree or they may disagree, but you would never have any way of finding out.[25]

Not surprisingly, Adrena came to mind. I mentioned her to Ruth.

> So, do you then assume, for example, that she's representative of the class? I think in many cases they're not, and yet what are you left with? You might want to develop a project, and so you ask for ideas, and you only get two out of twenty students providing any ideas. So, you're sort of stuck going with those ideas, but nobody else buys in, and so the project fizzles.

Darren, too, had experienced difficulty getting the students to talk. In the following excerpt, he gives his opinion as to the reason why. This is an extension of his "the Cambodians are a more quiet people" comment, and speaks to some of the ways in which the practices of the 'oldtimer' group are at odds with school expectations:

> Again, it's showing individualism, it's coming out and breaking away from the community, and that's just not part of their cultural background. It's a tough task to get them to show individualism. They're very communal, you know-community's important.

I had been provided with an explanation as to why Emily had avoided classroom discussions. I allowed that there was merit to this cultural argument. However, I had some concerns. First, I was still uncomfortable with ascribing general traits to an ethnic group. McDermott (1993) makes the important point that "when language is systematically unavailable to some, it is important that we not limit our explanation to the traits of the persons involved" (p. 283). I could also relate to Townsend and Fu's (1998) comment that "sometimes it is simply students' personalities that keep them quiet, but it's hard to untangle individual attributes such as shyness from cultural and gender role expectations as well as personal preparation for, and interest in, the topics of discussion" (p. 13). I was certainly having a difficult time unraveling the many strands of this complicated topic. The complexity can be seen in the following excerpt from my fieldnotes, written after a discussion I had with two student teachers who had completed practicums in Emily's class. We were discussing their choice of topics for an assignment related to the field experience.[26]

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[25] I would not necessarily agree that there was no way of finding out how the Asian students felt; possibilities will be explored in the final chapter.

Fieldnotes, November 26, 2000

Something that came up of interest in the discussion was the choice of topic for their praxis assignment-both student teachers have chosen something that sure fits in with my research interests. For Ross, it is the issue of ***silence.*** *Apparently, this is what he often met with in the Social Studies 7 class. He told me that he tried so hard to get discussion going–asked and asked questions–and ended up feeling very badly as he had so little success. He speculated as to why. Was the issue aggravated because they were doing 'culture' and the text had a very western (European) perspective? How much could be attributed to the ESL factor? their age? gender issues? trying to be cool? When I asked if they had seen Emily have successful discussions with the classes, they said not really; they thought she had a similar problem. But, had they seen her really try? No, not with the lessons they'd observed. When I explained a bit about my interest in ESL students, Ross made the comment that, "Oh, they can talk English–all it takes is a sub for one day who cannot control the class and you hear them talk!" Sally added, "Ya, you can sure hear them in the hallway." So, ok, they do talk!*

These comments reminded me that, of course, the students talked–rather than Emily's comment that "getting them to talk is like pulling teeth," a more apt statement may have been "getting them to talk in *certain contexts* is like pulling teeth." For example, the statement "She won't talk" or "She's shy" is problematic as it does not take the relationship or context into account; rather, the behaviour becomes a characteristic or trait of the child. This is different than saying something akin to "She's quiet in her relationship with me." Situating these comments in the research site, the implication was *change the context and they will talk*, as the student teachers' comments suggest. They talk, but they are reluctant to participate in classroom discussions. Sarun, for example, was anything but quiet in class, but according to Emily, he rarely contributed to teacher-whole class conversations. And, Kim and Hông, two of the most quiet students in class, proved to be very talkative in the interviews.

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[26] The praxis assignment for the course ED PS 310, *Managing the Learning Environment*, asked students to reflect upon a significant experience from their practicums.

Secondly, while I understood how Emily came to the decision to evade classroom discussions, I was concerned as to what this avoidance meant for the students. Despite some of the problems associated with classroom talk in this C of P–in some respects, *because* of these challenges–I still felt that classroom talk needed to play an important role in this context. In addition to the tangled factors mentioned above, the principal suggested another possible reason for the students' reluctance to engage in classroom dialogue.

> You also have to look at *why* it is that the students are having this difficulty. Are there other factors? And, one of the things that we've done a lot of work on, and come to some realizations about, is their language development. So, if you ask students to describe how they feel about something, and they don't have the vocabulary to describe it, then what are you going to get?

Was the language development of these students a factor? In my opinion, that many of the students who were reluctant to talk were also second language learners made the need for structured classroom talk more urgent. Nicholson (1999) argues that

> ...it is the ability to make connections between concepts, to transfer and renew ideas and knowledge, which is practiced and developed collaboratively through the dialogue afforded by structured classroom talk. Because intellectual and conceptual understanding is facilitated through oral communication, talk is integral to the process of learning. (p. 30)

Given the dynamics of this C of P, I had expected a kind of discussion that was perhaps unrealistic for these particular students. Still, the way in which oral discourse practices were enacted in this C of P did not appear to be to the students' best advantage. However, there are other types of structured classroom talk than the discussions I had in mind. In the remaining parts of this section, then, I examine some of the issues surrounding what Ruth meant by "their language development" and begin to explore what type of discourse practices would be better suited to this C of P. The reader will be see that solving the mystery was hardly an ending–in some respects it was just the beginning.

'Who's Acquiring What?' (Perspectives on Academic Discourse)

> It probably makes more sense to talk about how learning acquires people more than it makes sense to talk about how people acquire learning. Individually we may spend our time trying to learn things, but this phenomenon pales before the fact that, however hard we try, we can only learn what is around to be learned. If a particular kind of learning is not made socially available to us, there will be no learning to do. (McDermott, 1993, p. 277)

At this point in the research, I felt as though I had arrived at some type of crossroads–I had solved a mystery, after all. Thinking in terms of the crack metaphor, I wrote in my journal "the light really got in on this one." However, I did not have that feeling of satisfaction that tends to be associated with cracking a case. Rather, finding the answer to my query raised more questions. Because the fieldwork was over, though, I could not pursue this topic with the research participants. I was uncertain as to how to proceed. I thought about what Ruth had said at the end of the previous section regarding the students' language development. This had been my original focus, after all. Despite shifts, the topic was still germane. Emily's comment below summarizes her impression of the students' English language abilities (in particular, certain second language learners).

> They can *talk*, but they have trouble with academics. You know, they can have a conversation with each other, and that's good enough for them. But, I think next year it's going to hit them hard when they don't qualify for ESL, yet they don't have a great grasp of the English language.[27]

Emily's comment reminded me of a section of my master's thesis about Aboriginal students–*but my students all speak English*. Teachers may not understand that while students speak English, they may lack the kind of language needed for academic success. This line of thinking could be applied to some of the research participants.

Two articles in particular shaped my thinking as to how to proceed. Leung, Harris and Rampton (1997), who studied young adolescent students in multiethnic urban England, speak of the constant struggle to develop adequate pedagogies for the large numbers of bilingual pupils who are no longer at an early stage of learning English, who have spent a significant proportion of their lives in Britain, and who use everyday colloquial English with ease.[28] This description matches (to a considerable degree) most of the second language learners in my study. The authors explain that the conventional Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) assumption is that the ethnic minority pupils are beginners or relative newcomers to English (or at any rate lack Native-speaker expertise). I had made a similar assumption about the research participants I expected to work with–using Lave and Wenger's (1991) term, I had incorrectly positioned the second language learners as the 'newcomers'. According to Leung et al., a related assumption is that ethnic majority pupils possess expertise in standard English for academic purposes. They make the point that, given complex urban realities, this may not necessarily be the case. While recognizing that pedagogies need to be designed for the learner who is new to the English language, Leung et al. suggest that "other forms of English language pedagogy might be better based on an assumption that most learners, albeit from different starting points, are unfamiliar with the deployment of standard English for academic purposes" (p. 558). I was intrigued with this way of looking at language learners because, applied to my research site, it included all the students, not only the second language learners.

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[27] We have established that they can talk–now, it is not the 'right' kind of talk.

The second article which provided me with direction was Wolfe and Faltis's (1999) study of Spanish-speaking high school students (most of Mexican origin) in secondary ESL and bilingual classrooms in the United States. The authors explain that in school and in their communities, these students used both English and Spanish for interacting with friends, fellow students, and family members, but that the role of the high school "is to initiate these students into academic English discourse and to expand their proficiency in conventional English" (p. 83). Unlike the Wolfe and Faltis study, with the exception of Lee who worked for a short period of time with ESL newcomers, there were no ESL or sheltered content teachers at Coalfield School.[29] In other ways, though, parallels can be drawn to the research participants in my study. Like the students Leung et al. refer to, most of the ESL students were not at the early stages of English language learning. Like the students in the Wolfe and Faltis study, most considered themselves to be bilingual. Preparing students for high school, which was rapidly approaching, was a constant theme. The students in my research study needed to be initiated into an academic English discourse. To do so, what did they need to learn? And, related to the McDermott quotation (above), was what they needed to learn around to be learned? The Wolfe and Faltis article provided me with a way to approach these questions.

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[28] The authors note that this is often referred to as the *plateau effect,* in which the pupil does not seem to be able to make any further progress in English language development.

[29] Wolfe and Faltis (1999) note that in most high schools with large numbers of Spanish-speaking students, ESL and sheltered content teachers are primarily responsible for achieving these goals.

With respect to the appropriation of students into an academic discourse, Wolfe and Faltis explain that three lines of thinking, based on different conceptions of academic language and language acquisition, underlie much of the research on this topic: two-dimensional models of language proficiency, the mismatch model, and discourse as a community of practice. They followed a group of Spanish-speaking (Mexican origin) high school students in four high school classrooms–a traditional ESL class, a sheltered biology class, a sheltered English literature class, and a bilingual world history class. The purpose of the study was to contrast what happened in each of these classes to learn how access to and participation in academic discourse varied according to the classroom ideology underlying how knowledge gets constructed.[30] I will briefly explain these three perspectives, as presented by Wolfe and Faltis, and then relate each to my research site.

The *first perspective* draws from a two-dimensional conception of language: basic everyday language and academic language. Jim Cummins's (1981) BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) model is well-known in ESL and bilingual circles. Wolfe and Faltis's interpretation of Cummins' model is that students who fail in school lack CALP, "due primarily to the inaccessibility of academic-oriented language and literacy in their homes and communities and the predominance of oral interaction deeply embedded in shared personal meaning with ties to situational and contextual clues" (p. 84). The *second perspective* on academic language stems from the language-socialization mismatch model. In this view, students' progress in school depends on the extent to which the discourse recognized and reinforced in the school is similar to or differs from the ways that students are socialized to use language at home. With the *third perspective*, Wolfe and Faltis introduce discourse as a community of practice-in this view, academic language is a social discourse that entails ways of communicating, understanding and acting like an insider (Gee, 1992). They explain that "Discourse is an essential feature of membership within any community of practice, including academic subject-matter communities such as English literature, math, science, and social studies" (p. 85). Becoming a member of a community of practice requires a neophyte to be acquired into the discourse that is recognized and used by more capable members of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).[31] I was excited! Not only was I familiar with all three perspectives, on first glance they all appeared to speak to my research project. According to the authors, what the first two research perspectives have in common is that the focus is on how the student acquires the classroom discourse. In contrast, the third perspective takes a different theoretical slant about *how* and *why* learning occurs: the discourse acquires the student rather than the other way around (Faltis & Hudelson, 1994).

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[30] According to Wolfe and Faltis (1999), the ESL, biology and world history classes were teacher-centered, while the English literature class was holistic.

BICS and CALP: I had drawn on the work of Jim Cummins in minority language education extensively when I had written my thesis about Native language. I was familiar with his conception of BICS and CALP, having referred to the model in conference presentations and mentioned it to my language arts students. Certain comments made by teachers and the principal corresponded with this perspective. For example, Darren suggests that while English of a conversational nature is spoken in the home environment, students are not being exposed to academic-oriented English language and literacy in their homes.

> In this setting, I do a lot of work with students because of the lack of English language in many of their homes. Many of their parents don't write in English, or speak English, and if they do speak English, it is an abbreviated form that they've learned enough to get by here as adults, but not enough that their children would learn the language properly.

Emily attributed (to a degree) the poor academic progress of some of the Asian students to their language abilities. Her understanding as to their language development had come from conversations with various school staff, in particular the counselor. She explained:

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[31] For a more detailed account of these perspectives, see Wolfe and Faltis (1999, pp. 84-86).

> These kids are sort of an in-between crowd. They never fully learned their first language (which would have been Khmer or Vietnamese), because a lot of them came to Canada when they were about two or three when their language was developing. A lot of them, too, were in refugee camps, and parents probably didn't have time to read to them, and sing to them, and do those types of things. And then they weren't around people who were speaking English, and so they never really learned a language completely.[32]

I recognized what Emily was saying about the students from my master's thesis research. Cummins offers an explanation for this occurrence. Within the framework of his position that bilingualism enhances cognitive performance, his threshold hypothesis states that

> ...there may be threshold levels of linguistic proficiency which bilingual children must attain in order to avoid cognitive deficits, and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence cognitive growth... (Cummins, 1981, p. 38)

Harris (1990) explains that, in basic form, this hypothesis can be restated to say that "in terms of reaching full cognitive potential, a child who is only marginally proficient in two languages is worse off than a child who knows one language very well" (p. 95). Cummins' threshold hypothesis has to do with the danger of semilingualism. Ruth was also concerned about students' linguistic proficiency in both languages.

> The people who came as refugees, came from an illiterate background, and so they have very poor backgrounds for literacy development. That combined with little, if any, literacy in their first language makes learning a second language difficult. Then they learn English first on the playground from other children who have very low levels of English language development....As well, as their English skills grow, communication between generations decreases, because the parents, by and large, don't have well developed English skills. By the time they get into junior high they now need language development around abstract learning, and that further complicates things.

While there is support for the position that literacy in the first language facilitates developing literacy in the second, the reverse is a different statement. However, the school also played a role in producing students that had "little, if any, literacy in their first language." Wolfe and Faltis note that the focus of research from this perspective is, given the oral interactional abilities that many immigrant students bring to the classroom, what classroom teachers can do to add academic discourse to the students' repertoire of language abilities, preferably in their native language. When students are first learning English, they are likely to have trouble using the language to develop complex ideas; accordingly, they should use their first language to assist them in developing concepts across subject areas (Ward, 1997).

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[32] Interesting, these same students described themselves as "bilingual."

Based on the work I had done for my master's thesis, I was very interested in pursuing a line of inquiry that would allow me to study the ways in which first language use could foster academic achievement in English.[33] However, I had not been able to follow this direction. As mentioned earlier, Coalfield School did not have a bilingual program; second language learners were integrated into regular classes. Furthermore, the use of languages other than English was actually discouraged. Ruth explains the reason for this:

> I always believed that students should be encouraged to communicate effectively, so if that means that you use your first language, then I'm okay with that. But, I've changed because I've seen the divisions and the hurt that it causes. We found from our experiences here that students will use their first language as a way of isolating other students from the group. So, I think that in our setting we do have to say, you have to use English in class, other than for a new immigrant who needs some coaching in that specific language. Again, if they don't have the vocabulary you're putting all sorts of barriers up.

Given my strong stance towards first language maintenance and interest in exploring possibilities in my research, this position initially struck me as yet another crack in the project. However, as with the other cracks, this helped to illuminate what I needed to learn about *this* research site. As Ward (1997) points out "language maintenance requires us to feel comfortable about hearing a variety of languages in our schools. For many of us, this means we have to examine our beliefs about language (p. 63).

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[33] It is important to note that I was also particularly interested in initiatives to promote first language maintenance in and of themselves. Studies have shown that using the Aboriginal language to develop competence in English can have an adverse effect on the Aboriginal language (see Harris, 1990, 1991, 1994). Parallels can be drawn to contexts involving other minority languages.

Ruth's beliefs had certainly been challenged by dynamics within the C of P (in this case, the school-wide C of P), resulting in a change in practice. I have data that support Ruth's decision. As with the 'like pulling teeth' incident, however, I wonder as to the cost. Her earlier comments, as well as the literature, could be used to show that the decision to not use first languages could be seen as detrimental to students' possibilities for achieving academic success. Conceivably Ruth is unsure how to intervene in a bilingual 'community of practice', and the related social relationships, and so insists on a unilingual one. Are there other ways to think about this that would enable the children to talk about why and where and when they use one language or another to communicate? Goldstein (1997) suggests that

> one way of beginning to deal with issues of linguistic advantage and disadvantage in the multilingual classroom is by talking about them in a direct, forthright manner....Language practices, like other *classroom practices* (e.g. rules, evaluation practices), can be discussed and negotiated with students.[34] (p. 368)

Wolfe and Faltis explain that, at the secondary level, researchers have drawn on Cummins's work to construct ways of enabling students who are becoming bilingual to acquire discipline-specific language that is context-reduced and academically challenging (see, for example, Chamot and O'Malley, 1987 and Chamot, 1994 for an explanation of the Cognitive Academic Learning Approach). This line of investigation would have been challenging to follow at Coalfield School as well, as there was no ESL program.

So, while I was able to find research data that corresponded to this perspective, due to the type of programming offered, to attempt to pursue this research perspective was problematic. Furthermore, it should be noted that the BICS and CALP explanation are from Cummins's early work (1979, 1981). In a later book, Cummins (1989) argues that "under achievement is not caused by lack of fluency in English. Under achievement is the result of particular kinds of interactions in school that lead minority students to mentally withdraw from academic effort" (p. 34). Given my theoretical framework is grounded in sociocultural literature, this way of thinking about under achievement made more sense and will be furthered later in the dissertation.

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[34] At the same time, Goldstein (1997) recognizes that negotiation around classroom language practices occurs in a larger educational, political and economic context.

Language-socialization Mismatch Model: I was familiar also with the second perspective, the mismatch model, from literature I had read for my master's thesis. There are two main forms of the cultural argument: the more extreme cultural deficiency version which considers students from poor and minority backgrounds to have deficiencies that need to be corrected and the more moderate cultural difference or mismatch version to which Wolfe and Faltis refer. For the purposes of this work, my discussion will focus on the second version. In this version, language in particular has been used as a primary example of the ways in which children are mismatched with schools and school personnel (for example, Bernstein, 1977; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1983). Advocates of the cultural difference or mismatch perspective attribute value to the backgrounds of nonmainstream children, but maintain that these children's experiences are not what educational institutions value (Valdés, 1996). According to Wolfe and Faltis, research related to this perspective draws from Mehan's (1979) work on classroom discourse, in which he described what is considered the traditional pattern of teacher and student interaction–IRE (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) sequence. As can be construed from the 'like pulling teeth' section, regarding IRE or recitation, the classroom discourse patterns in Emily's classroom clearly did not match the literature. Lave and Wenger (1991) make the point that in a community of practice, "there are no special forms of discourse aimed at apprentices or crucial to their centripetal movement toward full participation that correspond to the marked genres of the question-answer-evaluation format of classroom teaching" (p. 108). Accordingly, the IRE pattern has been heavily criticized as 'not natural' or useful outside the classroom context. My challenge in this regard was that I was studying the classroom *as a community of practice*.

However, the authors state that researchers have used Mehan's work to argue that there is a mismatch between how non-Native English speakers participate in discourse and how the school expects them to participate. Many studies have concluded that language-socialization mismatches negatively influence academic success for language-minority students (see, for example, Au, 1980; Cazden, 1988; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982). Although my study did not focus on the students' home discourse patterns (as did Heath's, for example), the comments made by teachers confirm that in certain ways they considered that students' home discourse was 'mismatched' with school discourse. The 'like pulling teeth' incident provides an example. Emily's comment, below, emphasises this:

> …how in their culture, you know, you respect the teacher. You don't ask questions, you don't give the teacher any trouble, and so they don't. Yet, in our culture, it's the opposite. If you don't understand it, you ask a question, you know, and make sure you're interacting.

The "question asking" that Emily refers is a common discourse practice in schools, one that appears to be at odds with the cultural expectations of many of the students in the class. Scribner and Cole (1981) suggest that asking questions–learning how to 'do' school appropriately–may be a major part of what school teaches.[35] In the previous section, we learned that many members in this C of P were reluctant to ask questions. In the following interview exchange, we see that Adrena may be better positioned to do what is expected in schools. Her comments also emphasis the point that these students *do talk*, but in *certain* contexts (only). Adrena had been explaining how she felt constrained by the expectations at Coalfield School to be a "certain way."

> Adrena: I mouth off at my teachers. Well, no, that's the wrong word. I ask interrogative questions, and like, nobody speaks up, and they laugh when I do. I'm sorry, I want to learn. I want to get the best of my education. It's like, excuse me, I need to know this material. I want to be able to take psychology, and things in high school. Shut up so I can learn this. And I've told the kids to shut up.
>
> Lynne: So, you're saying nobody speaks up, but at the same time you're telling them to shut up?
>
> Adrena: Well, they're talking about, like, sports, or something. Like, they won't ask questions, they're confused, they wait till the assignment's due, and they're like, "I didn't get it done 'cause I don't understand it." And then, well, the teacher has to help them when they had all that time, when she could be helping people that know what they're doing, but just need a little bit of help. They could have spoken up, and got it done.

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[35] Whether this is what school *should* be teaching is another question, one that will be addressed in the next section.

Similarly, Townsend and Fu (1998) found that the Laotian students in their study expressed reluctance to impose on their teachers by speaking out. As before, Adrena's remarks miss the mark when it comes to recognizing any cultural reasons for classmates' behaviour which she finds puzzling. Lori, the student teacher, had also noticed that the students did not speak up in class. In the interview excerpt, below, she compares the students at Coalfield School to those she had worked with in Toronto.

> The kids here are respectful of the teachers. There's not a lot of complaining, or talking–they just sort of do their work and that's it. These guys seem more mature in that sense. The students I've experienced before need a lot of direction. They consistently are asking questions for everything...But these guys, they seem to just sort of get down to work without much direction, which is a good thing.

From their diverse vantage points, Lori and Adrena see this issue differently. One still wonders, though, if the students were getting what they needed. If we listen to Adrena's comment, some were not. In this regard, my observations were similar to Adrena's. My opinion was that many of the students were not getting the direction they needed, and that not asking questions and not speaking up in class were factors. Lori had only been involved with these students for a short time, and may not have been aware that these practices exacted a price. What were the implications? Did this particular community practice, also an avoidance, limit students' access to acquiring academic discourse?

In addition to the students' questions, there is the *question* of the teacher's questions. Nystrand (1997) makes the point that while questions are not everything, and that authentic questions do not invariably produce learning

> nonetheless, one must not underestimate the role teachers' questions play in shaping the character of classroom discourse as it affects learning. Questions presume answers. As negotiations of sorts, question-answer sequences reveal important features of teacher-student interaction and hence the character of instruction. Much can be learned about teacher-student interaction and talk in a classroom by determining the source of

> questions, the extent of authenticity and uptake, the level of cognitive activity that questions elicit, and so on.[36] (p. 37)

I am not debating Nystrand's point that teachers' questions play a role in shaping the character of classroom discourse. In this C of P, though, we have learned not to underestimate the role of the *students* in shaping classroom discourse. Emily had, in effect, stopped asking questions, at least questions that *presumed answers*. My concern was how *that* affected learning. I will discuss this further in the next section/chapter.

Given what has been presented here, it seems that this perspective offers a possible explanation as to why language minority students *may* be doing poorly in school. Data can be interpreted to support the view that language-socialization mismatches negatively influence academic success for the language-minority students in my study. What does this perspective have to say about how to proceed, though? Practices implemented based on cultural difference/language socialization perspective are compensatory in nature and rooted in 'deficit' thinking.

> The deficit theory assumes that language and culture are storehouses from which children acquire their competence. Some children get more and some get less. These are assertions about which we should be most uncomfortable. (McDermott, 1993, pp. 282-3).

Referring to learning disabled children (who enter school without some of the required skills), McDermott says, "They are hard to fill." I could not help but think of some of the research participants in this regard–in particular, the Cambodian boys. From this perspective, they did seem to be 'hard to fill." However, I *was* uncomfortable with assumption. Clearly, I needed another way to approach the "appropriation of students into an academic discourse."

Discourse as a Community of Practice: Naturally, I was familiar with Lave and Wenger's community of practice perspective, but the manner in which Wolfe and Faltis had explained 'discourse-as-a-community-of-practice' provided me a new way to think about the discourse practices in my research site. Wolfe and Faltis contrast discourse-as-a-community-of-practice (which they link to the work of whole language researchers) with discourse-as-providing-known-answers (which they associate with teacher-centred pedagogy). According to the authors, teachers from the discourse-as-a-community-of-practice perspective "work to move students toward insidership by engaging them in the mutual construction of the discourse that community members recognize and use to discuss and critique their knowledge system" (p. 86). As with the other two perspectives, I could not take this new insight into the classroom; I could, however, use this stance to reexamine my data to determine if the "academic discourse had acquired the student rather than the other way around."

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[36] Nystrand (1997) defines *authenticity* as whether or not teacher questions had prespecified answers and *uptake* as the incorporation of previous answers into subsequent questions.

As this was a new way of thinking about classroom discourse for me, Gee's (1992, p. 113) question, "How do people come by the Discourses they are members of?" seemed like a good place to start. Gee's view is that

> Discourses are mastered through *acquisition,* not *learning*.[37] That is, Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation ('apprenticeship') into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse (Newman, Griffin & Cole, 1989; Tharp & Gillmore; 1988). This is how we acquire our native language, our home-based Discourse, and, later, our more public-oriented Discourses. (p. 114)

What Gee is saying sounds very much like Lave and Wenger's description of the manner in which people become absorbed into communities of practice. As I had done before, I contextualized this through my experience as a doctoral student. Mine had been an 'apprenticeship' into the social practices of teacher educators through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who had already mastered the Discourse–the professors I worked with in the faculty. What were the implications for the students in my research project? Did they have access to the social practices that would get them into the academic English discourse? Did they have scaffolded and supported interaction with people who had already mastered the Discourse? What would this look like? Wolfe and

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[37] Gee (1992) makes a distinction between learning and acquisition. *Acquisition* is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. By contrast, *learning* is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection.

Faltis provide an example from a sheltered English literature class.[38] The authors found that students in this class were using language for a wide variety of purposes, and that the language they used was appropriate for gaining insider membership into the academic discourse of English literacy. The following comment is in relation to an exchange that occurred during a one-on-one editing conference.

> Because this classroom is designed to have students "do what writers do," the teacher refers to how actual authors write rather than give the student discrete grammatical information. ...The teacher's initial move establishes that both she and the student are involved in activities that place them (as legitimate participants) in a wider (in this case, literary) community that has certain rules, patterns, and so forth that make up its discourse. For the teacher as well as the student, these tasks are authentic (other writers really do them) and are meaningful (they enable you to achieve your goals).[39] (pp. 97-98)

I decided to compare this to writing instruction in Emily's class. During the time I observed in the class, a fair amount of time had been allotted to essay writing. I had difficulty finding evidence that writing instruction in Emily's class was designed to have students "do what writers do." What I found was a two-fold interrelated discourse about preparing students for both Grade 10 and the provincial achievement exam.[40] Early in the second semester, just after she had passed out their first term report card marks, Emily gave the following talk to her students:

Fieldnotes, November 17, 2000
We focused on paragraphs in the first semester, but we'll be doing more essay writing and grammar in the second semester and you may find your mark going down, but not necessarily.[41] *High schools will be looking at your marks for this semester, but that does not mean you can slack off in the last semester either, especially if you want to get into English 10.*[42]

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[38] Wolfe and Faltis describe this class as holistic, in contrast to the other classes attended by the focal students which they consider to be teacher-centered.

[39] The teacher's initial move was to try to get a sense of the student's intention with the writing.

[40] Students were required to write provincial achievement exams at the end of Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

[41] The 'preparing for high school discourse' was not limited to writing instruction; rather, it applied to all aspects of the language arts curriculum covered in Emily's class.

[42] English 10 is the 'academic' stream for Grade 10 students, whereas English 13 is the 'non-academic' stream.

The same day, in conversation, Emily expressed some of her concerns about her students' writing abilities. She told me that while their mechanics are not the best, some of their ideas are amazing. She mentioned, not for the first time, how her students' English language abilities played a role in their low marks. The first day I visited the class following the Christmas break, Emily explained that she had started the new term out "really seriously." They were going to focus on essay writing for the rest of term, in preparation for the final exam. She showed me the materials they had been working from, a structured, step-by-step graphic organizer for writing an essay. Looking at my fieldnotes in retrospect, the goal was not to look at what real writers do, but to be able to write an essay that will enable them to pass the provincial exam and/or access English 10. This preparation continued till the end of term, as can be seen by the following fieldnote excerpt.

Fieldnotes, May 23, 2000
When I visited the class today (the provincial exam is in two days), the students were working on making posters on chart paper about essay writing to put up in the room. Emily explained to me that while she cannot say anything to them on exam day that will help them on their exam, she found out that they can have posters. In addition to information about essay structure, she suggested that they include the marking criteria for the essays. As the students finished, they posted their charts on the wall. Some of the posters were really colourful. Dylan had done his like a web. Sarun stuck his upside down, which got a good laugh from his friends. Tomorrow they are going to go over 'essay writing' in class, but unfortunately I'll miss this because of CSSE. Emily told me she hopes the organization section will pull them through to at least a passing grade.

At no point did I hear any talk that situated Emily and her students as legitimate participants in a wider literary community of 'real writers.' Rather, the talk was related to expectations for the exam, or what they would need to know for high school. It is important to note that I was not in class all the time, nor was I present at any editing conferences Emily had with students, so I cannot say if these discussions were different. I can say that editing conferences were not scheduled on a regular basis. I should also point out that my intention here is not to criticize Emily, but to try to contextualize the research perspectives put forth by Wolfe and Faltis regarding the appropriation of students into an academic discourse. And, to make the point that in spite of all the time spent on essay writing, (with exceptions) Emily was not particularly satisfied with the results as the end of the year approached, as can be seen in the following interview excerpt. We had been talking about some of the challenges students faced due to their language abilities. I asked her what she found to be most helpful in terms of supporting her students:

> What I found works best is literally going through sentence by sentence on how to write a paragraph, or how to write an essay. And, even with these essays that they did recently–this is like their third or fourth essay, and they've had the same format, and some of them still aren't doing it. You know, that logic just doesn't seem to work–I don't get it. I'm not kidding. Like the format doesn't change from essay to essay, yet they'll hand something in and say, "Oh, here it is. It's done. I wrote something." But, it's not good enough. It's not what I asked them to do… The ones who are self motivated can do it. The ones who aren't self motivated, they can't, or won't, maybe.

Emily had provided the students with a step-by-step structure, which they had worked through systematically and repeatedly. This type of scaffolding, often missing in the language arts class, appeared to be helping some students. Nouy, one of the 'self motivated' ones, had worked very hard and made considerable progress since her arrival from Vietnam. She still found essay writing to be particularly difficult. The following comments surfaced during a conversation about the ways in which teachers had been particularly helpful:

> They've been very caring, like for example, Mrs. Carstairs, she makes us to do a lot of essays, because last year we have trouble doing that. I'm not sure if that's her job to teach us to do essays–I think it's more on the caring side. She gave us this big sheet about learning how to plan essays, like having an introduction and that really helped.

I wondered where Nouy got the idea that teaching essay writing was not part of Emily's job. Nouy had learned how to follow the 'big sheet' and plan an essay–did she consider herself to be a writer, though? What about those who were not self motivated? As Emily continues her remarks about these students, she contradicts herself. On the one hand, she says this works; at the same time she says they have not got it.

> But, if I sit and go sentence by sentence with them, they'll put the effort in, but that's what they need. They need you to hold their hands, and I did that for the first two essays, but then there has to come a time where, okay, you're on your own because next year they're on their own. You know, it's obvious to me that they can't, they won't succeed in English 10, and hopefully they can in English 13, but I don't know. So that's what

> worked–holding their hand, step by step. And, what doesn't work is letting them try it on their own.

With this example, the focus is clearly on how the students are acquiring the discourse, as opposed to the discourse acquiring the students. For the students to be acquired by the discourse, they would have to see themselves as 'writers,' which would involve identity[43] Emily is clearly frustrated that they still do not seem able to write a proper essay even though she has given them a clear format to follow. As with language arts teachers who teach decontextualized grammar lessons year after year because the students "still don't get it", Emily does not seem to have considered the possibility that at least part of the problem could be in the delivery of the lesson.

I decided to examine the transcript of the interview I had done with Darren to see if I could find a description that more closely matched what Wolfe and Faltis were describing. Darren taught language arts to the Grade 7 students. The exchange (below) is an excerpt from a discussion about the challenges of teaching writing to second language learners. As I had done with Emily, I asked him what he found helpful. Darren explained that they had "done lots of reading and lots of writing, lots of novel studies" and went on to describe how he used one of the novels, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe,* to work on students' writing skills. He had chosen a book at the Grade 5/6 reading level.

> I wanted a book I knew everyone could read, that they would find easy to read so that we could use it to look at figures of speech, similes, metaphors, personification and so on. Then we started to look at themes. We looked at character traits. And they were doing response journals after every chapter. I wanted them to be able to understand the story well enough that they could write and then I would really get an honest evaluation of where the writing was at, and so that was the focus for that one.

Darren went on to explain how he then used their response journals to have the students work on their writing skills:

> I would take their response journals home (they wrote a response for each of the seventeen chapters), and I'd spend many hours editing work, and then in the morning, what I would do is I pick four or five students, and I

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[43] This implication will be further developed in the section on identity practices.

> bring them to the front, and I put their book in front of them. We discuss how you would state that, and get them to re-write it in the proper form. And, then we do it again. And we do it again. And we do it again. The next day I'd pull another four students up and we'd go over chapter two, and so on. I saw each student one-on-one two or three times within the novel study to look at their writing, and it's one of the things I'm really happy with in my language arts group this year.

I asked Darren: "It's now near the end of the year, and you've been working intensively with your students on reading and writing tasks all year. Have you noticed a big improvement?"

> Yes. Especially the quality because I've pounded away on the figures of speech and adding those elements into your writing, how it enriches your writing, how it engages the reader, how it makes for a better piece of writing. Before, they would just say, "The witch said stop." Now it's, "The witch roared out in a voice of anger, stop! Stop you evil fiends!" The whole imagery that they create within their writing has changed from night to day. And, I've kept all their writing from day one in a folder, because what I love to do is on the last day of school, I pull it out and give them a copy of their first day writing, and I give them a copy of their last day writing, and I ask them, "So, what did you learn?" And, I ask them to write about it. And, that's when they see, "Oh, I did learn something in here." And, that's what I find is the biggest thing. I love to leave them with the feeling that they accomplished something in my class because I think in most cases we don't give the kids enough opportunity to see what they're learning.[44]

Although I did not have the opportunity to observe Darren teaching language arts, his account certainly sounded more like discourse as a community of practice. Darren considers the doing it again and again to be necessary, whereas Emily sees it as babying. This emphasises the importance of using technical terms like 'scaffolding' to replace judgmental terms like 'hand holding' as teachers find ways to help students move to more sophisticated and demanding cognitive competences. It may be worth noting here that Darren was teaching language arts to Grade 7s, while Emily taught the Grade 9 students. In addition to the expectation that older students should be more capable writers, as mentioned there was double pressure to teaching Grade 9, for these students were being prepared for high school and high school entrance examinations.

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[44] Although the discussion in the previous section centered on oral discourse, these examples have highlighted written discourse. The examination of oral discursive practices will continue.

Wolfe and Faltis draw the conclusion that "the decision to organize classroom discourse is politically or ideologically driven" and that "participation in communities of practice that involve academic discourse varies according to the political or ideological perspective that predominates in the classroom" (p. 100). Study findings suggest that whether students were being invited into academic English discourse or not, is a matter of whether the class is teacher-centered or "holistic." I was unable to directly apply these results to my research context. In this regard, Nystrand's (1997) comments regarding the longstanding debate as to the relative effectiveness of teacher control/ direct instruction as compared to student control/collaborative learning proved helpful.

> Indeed, a long tradition of research and polemic pitting of teacher versus student as the appropriate theoretical center for understanding curriculum and instruction has precluded our understanding that more basic than either teacher or student is the relationship between them. (p. 6)

Certainly, the nature of the relationship between teacher and students had been instrumental in shaping classroom discourse in this context. The practices in this classroom did not invite students into academic discourse. The reason for this was not that Emily ran a teacher-centred classroom; neither was the way she organized (this aspect of) classroom discourse based on an obvious teaching ideology. Rather, Emily had been shaped by students for whom 'talking in class' was 'like pulling teeth.' The argument put forth by Wolfe and Faltis did not apply to this C of P. However, the article enabled me to think about whether or not her students were being acquired by academic discourse. Returning to McDermott's (1993) introductory quote, this section shows that the kind of learning that these students needed for this to happen was not being made socially available to them. How to make that available, then? Which discourse structures would expand possibilities for acquisition into an academic discourse? While there are no easy answers for these questions, I will begin to explore possibilities in the final component of this section and carry on the discussion in the remaining chapters.

The 'Silenced Dialogue' (Language as a Conversation)

> Language and culture are no longer scripts to be acquired, as much as they are conversations in which people can participate. The question of who is learning what and how much is essentially a question of what conversations they are a part of, and this question is a subset of the more

> powerful question of what conversations are to be had in a given culture. (McDermott, 1993, p. 295)

I had made progress as to my retrospective inquiry into the discourse practices within the research site. In addition to solving a mystery, I had considered whether the student participants were being acquired by academic discourse. Although I had figured some things out, it seemed that I had generated more questions than I had answered. How to proceed? Having accepted a teaching position at a college, I had moved away from the university and my 'academic' support system–supervisors, professors, fellow graduate students, the library. I found myself alone, with a procession of questions marching through my head: What was the cost to the students of Emily's decision to avoid classroom discussions? Was it disrespectful of cultural practices to expect the students to engage in discussion? Was oral discourse the most appropriate way for these students to learn? I knew I had to address some of these questions in the conclusion to my section on discourse practices. However, for every question I tried to answer, there was a counter-question. Every attempt I made to write ended in frustration. I situated myself in McDermott's observation that "the question of who is learning what and how much is essentially a question of what conversations they are a part of." I knew that, in order to make sense of the next stage of my inquiry, I needed to be part of a dialogue. Dialogue is defined by Bakhtin (1981) as the relationship of one turn to the next, as in conversation, which he characterizes as, "an intense interaction...a process in which [one's own and another's word] oppose or dialogically inter-animate each other" (p. 354). I imagined the conversations I might have: with Emily, with the principal, with my supervisor, with the theorists whose work I was reading. Still, I needed more than an *imaginary* conversation.

> *One enters into conversation in order to become an other for the other.*
> (Lingis, 1994, p.89)

And so I entered into conversation for this work to become an other to myself.

First Voice: I've been thinking about McDermott's quotation–if the question of who is learning what and how much is essentially a question of what conversations they are part of, then don't I need to reexamine Emily's decision to avoid initiating classroom discussion? I understand that the students found it difficult to talk in certain contexts, and Emily was uncomfortable with the silences that ensued. But, I find myself coming back to the conversations that didn't yet perhaps should have happened. And, I think she knew her avoidance extracted a price. She did say: "It (discussion) probably should be practiced more."

> *Other Voice:* True. The mention of silence, though, somehow makes me think of Lisa Delpit's (1988) article, The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children. She talks about what she calls the "culture of power" and how White educators think they know what's best for everybody's children.

First Voice: Having made a career of 'educating other people's children,' that's something I've thought about a lot. How does this relate to what went on in Emily's class, though?

> *Other Voice:* Well, the dialogue to which Delpit refers is one in which White educators have not listened to Black parents (and others) about how best to teach Black students. The 'silenced dialogue' in Emily's class had to do with 'power and pedagogy in educating other people's children,' but it took such a different shape.

First Voice: Are you suggesting that the 'silenced dialogue' in Emily's class wasn't because she wouldn't listen, but rather that the students wouldn't talk*?*

> *Other Voice:* Well, at least not in the 'expected' school way. Gee says that: "There is no doubt that many minority and lower socioeconomic students have great difficulty accommodating to or adapting to certain 'mainstream' Discourses, in particular, many school-based Discourses. These Discourses often conflict seriously (in values, attitudes, ways of acting, thinking, and talking) with their own home–and community–based Discourses" (p. 117).

First Voice: The 'like pulling teeth incident' provides an example of that. And, while Emily's 'discomfort' was a significant factor in how that came about, I think she was also concerned about not making the students uncomfortable. Townsend and Fu (1998) note that many teachers wonder whether they are showing proper respect for home cultural values when they encourage quiet Asian students, especially Asian girls, to speak out. Gendered practices in the research site were certainly intertwined with ethnicity. Let me ask you this–if it means being disrespectful, should those practices be disrupted?

> *Other Voice:* Good question. When we were discussing the students' reluctance to talk in public contexts in class, Ruth told me that
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> > you have to look at it in a number of ways. One is, we've got a lot to learn, because we approach things from our point of view. We have all these expectations about what's important, and what's valuable, and we give them marks for it, and it's not a shared value. (Ruth)

First Voice: I agree that we have a lot to learn and, believe me, I have been examining my expectations. But, it seems to me that the bottom line–at least the current one–is that we expect students to carry on discussions, to speak up in class, to interact with each other. We may 'celebrate' cultural diversity, but we still require all students to take the same exam. So, what's a teacher to do?

> *Other Voice:* Well, speaking of 'bottom lines', I tend to agree with Nystrand (1997) that "the bottom line for instruction is that the quality of student learning is closely linked to the quality of classroom talk" (p. 29). And, in my opinion, the quality of talk in Emily's classroom left much to be desired.

First Voice: I agree with you. But, aren't there other ways for teachers to make learning 'available' other than classroom discussion? Think about it. In Cambodia or Vietnam, do you really think the 'cultures' interfere with children's ability to learn what they need to learn? Ruth has a 'bottom line' on this one as well. You have to admit she raises a pertinent question:

> The bottom line, for me, is to question why we believe that discussion is so important–is it only this important because of our background, culture, etc. For example, do I process better through discussion because discussion was part of my upbringing? Is it a 'skill' that everybody needs or only 'Westerners' need? Perhaps it is simply a part of our own cultural bias? (Ruth)

> *Other Voice:* Of course there are other ways for students to learn than through oral discourse. We did pay some attention to written discourse in the last section. But, as Cazden (1988) points out, spoken language is the medium by which much teaching takes place, and in which students demonstrate to teachers much of what they have learned. Moreover, given their 'language abilities', I think these students, in particular, needed structured classroom talk.

First Voice: Would you agree, though, that given the context, 'structured classroom talk' would have to look somewhat different in this class?

> *Other Voice:* Oh, definitely. You know, recent research on language in classroom settings shows that both classroom teachers in their practice and educational researchers in their descriptive analyses have begun to deviate from the norm, in other words–IRE (Hicks, 1996).

First Voice: I sometimes wonder what Emily's discussion practices were like before she came to Coalfield School. I have no idea whether she participated in the common recitation sequence, or if she had managed to construct participant frameworks that defied the more traditional social roles of teachers and students.

> *Other Voice*: I wonder. It seems ironic somehow–Gutierrez and Larson (1994) say while recitation limits instructional opportunities for all students, its pervasive use denies language minority students the opportunity to appropriate the cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural knowledge that is most valued and critical to academic success.

First Voice: Well, Emily didn't practice recitation. But, those silences seem to have contributed to a similar result as many of her students were not appropriating the various knowledges they needed for academic success.

> *Other Voice:* Agreed. But, what do you think about this? Gutierrez and Larson suggest that "language practices and participation structures construct the borders that insure the protection of the cultural capital of the dominant society" (p. 33). They go on to say that the persistent use of the recitation script helps preserve traditional classroom participation structures and traditional beliefs about the social roles and relationships of student and teacher.

First Voice: Well, you can't blame Emily for that. In her classroom, it was the students' behaviour and cultural practices that helped preserve traditional beliefs about the social roles and student-teacher relationships. It's easy to criticize the teacher, especially from the vantage point of researcher, 'enlightened by 'theory'. But, surely you're not suggesting that Emily was trying to protect the cultural capital of the dominant society?

> *Other Voice:* No, I'm not, but that doesn't mean it won't happen. Delpit also talks about 'protecting the cultural capital of the dominant society' but offers a different perspective. She says that "to provide schooling for everyone's children that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, stays in the hands of those who already have it" (p. 285). This is because some children come to school with more "cultural capital" already in place.

First Voice: In many respects, I would say these students have a wealth of cultural capital–they speak languages other than English, they are members of non-Western religions, and they negotiate between various Asian cultures and popular Western culture. However, many of these students came to school with less "cultural capital" in terms of what is valued in school currency. No wonder they are having a hard time accommodating to, as Gee would say, 'school-based Discourses.' And, yet we come in with our middle class expectations, and we're also giving students mixed messages. On the one hand we tell them that meaning and process are important. I know, because this is what I'm teaching my student teachers. On the other hand, they write the Grade 9 provincial achievement exams and you know how they fare on those.

> *Other Voice*: I know what you mean. Gee (1992) says that:
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> > Unfortunately, however, many middle-class, mainstream, status-giving Discourses often do stress surface features of language. Why? Precisely because such surface features are the best test as to whether one was apprenticed in the 'right place, at the 'right' time, with the 'right' people. Since these Discourses are used as 'gates' to ensure that the 'right' people get to the 'right' places in our society, such surface features are ideal. (p. 117)
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> > Delpit also refers to gates: "pretending that gatekeeping points don't exist is to ensure that many students will not pass through them" (p. 292). She says that to imply to students that it does not matter how you talk or write is to ensure their ultimate failure.

First Voice: The implications of that are pretty powerful.

> *Other Voice:* Yes, they are. That's why Delpit says that parents who don't function within the culture of power "want to ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional styles, and spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society" (p. 285). I can't profess to speak for the parents of the research participants, and the context is very different than the one to which Delpit refers. But, I think some parallels can be drawn.

First Voice: So, what about the importance of students' first languages and cultural backgrounds. Is Delpit suggesting students give that up in their quest to join the 'culture of power'?

> *Other Voice*: She is not–in fact, she says that for the school to attempt to change the homes of poor and non-White children to match the homes of those in the culture of power would be cultural genocide. Schools need to understand that those parents transmit "another culture that children must learn at home to survive in their communities" (p. 286). What schools need to do is to provide these children the content that other families from a different cultural orientation provide at home.

First Voice: That's a rather tall order. I'd say that's actually an unrealistic expectation. But, I'll give you a chance to explain. How would this work?

> *Other Voice:* Well, Gee (1992) says that "you cannot overtly teach anyone a Discourse, in a classroom or anywhere else" (p. 115), which is precisely why the 'superficialities' work so well as 'gates.' What students need, according to Gee, is an early apprenticeship in 'middle-class like,' school-based ways of doing and being.

First Voice: Wouldn't you say the research participants missed out on that early apprenticeship while they were in the refugee camps*?*

> *Other Voice*: Why do you think this part of the dissertation has been so difficult to write? That's why I was so excited to hear Gee (1992) propose "a partial way out of the dilemma" (p. 118). He says for students who 'come into the game late' and with little opportunity for real apprenticeships within dominant Discourses outside what they can get in the classroom–sounds like the research participants to me–that 'mushfake Discourse' is possible.

First Voice: Mushfake*?*

> *Other Voice*: Mushfake-it's a term from prison culture meaning to make do with something less when the real thing is not available.[45] By 'mushfake Discourse', Gee means "partial acquisition coupled with metaknowledge and strategies to 'make do'" (p. 119).

First Voice: Let me get this straight. You're suggesting that we tell student teachers how they can 'make do'–with students who are already disadvantaged?

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[45] See Mack (1989, pp. 61-62) for an explanation of 'mushfake.'

> *Other Voice:* Well, remember mushfake Discourse is a partial answer. Delpit says that "if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of the culture makes acquiring power easier." (p. 282)

First Voice: What are these "rules of the culture" then?

> *Other Voice:* Well, of course there are many, but here's an example that can be related to the research participants. Gee (1992) explains that what typically counts as 'teaching' in our culture involves breaking down what is to be taught into its analytic bits and getting learners to learn it in such a way that they can "talk about," "describe," "explain" it–the learner is meant to have "metaknowledge" about what is learned and to be able to engage in "metatalk" about it. I don't think the research participants knew how to do this well.

First Voice: Talking about talking–that would constitute a double challenge for these students. So, situate this in the research site for me.

> *Other Voice:* I've got an example from the data that speaks to this topic. I think Gee can shed some light on Emily's comment (in the previous section) that began "You know, they can have a conversation with each other, and that's good enough for them." We had been talking about some of the students who were not doing too well academically–in particular, the Cambodian boys.
>
> > It's almost like, when I was in the States, in Michigan, and I hope this doesn't come across as racist 'cause it's not meant to be, but a Black person would have a lingo that he would use with his culture, and a different one that he would use out in the business world, and that's sort of an understood thing. Like, if you want to make it in the business world you're not going to be calling each other brothu, and that kind of talk–it just wouldn't do. And, I think these guys don't realize that. In your own group, it's fine to talk that way, but once you step out, you need a different kind of talk. (Emily)

First Voice: Or, in other words, they don't have the kind of language that is going to get them past the gates mentioned by Gee and Delpit.

> *Other Voice*: Exactly. Look at what Emily is saying about the different 'lingos.' Gee would say Discourses. While the Black person to which Emily refers can move between different 'lingos', she's suggesting that her students are not able to do that. It's clearly the 'school language' or 'academic discourse' they are not competent in. She's aware of this, and she should be making the students aware, as well.

First Voice: So, the goal should be to have students competent in both discourses and to be able to transfer between them?

> *Other Voice:* Yes. Gee says that as a Discourse is being mastered by acquisition, learning can facilitate 'metaknowledge'. "Classroom instruction…can lead to metaknowledge, to seeing how the Discourses

> you have already got relate to those you are attempting to acquire, and how those you are trying to acquire relate to self and society" (p. 117). They have a discourse, but they have not yet adequately acquired the school-based discourse, or been acquired by same. Which takes us back to the role of the teacher. I don't see how this can be done by avoiding conversation.

First Voice: Given Emily's students, I don't think this would be an easy conversation to have.

> *Other Voice:* No, agreed. But, Gee says that the 'liberal' classroom that avoids overt talk of form, of how things work, as well as of their sociocultural-political basis, are no help. And, Delpit criticizes teachers who (even though they may have good intentions) deny students access to the teacher as source of knowledge necessary to learn the forms they need to succeed.

First Voice: Well, Emily certainly had good intentions. I know that Emily really cared about her students–she was worried about how they were going to fare in high school, especially knowing how behind some of them were. Listen to this:

> I think the frustrating thing for me is that I want their education more than they want it, and I'm afraid next year that they're just going to flop. You can talk and talk and talk about what next year's going to be like, but until they're actually living it, they're not going to know.(Emily)

> *Other Voice:* So at some level she feels she must prepare them for another community of practice. But what she did was talk and talk and talk about what next year's going to be like. Is that what the students needed? As with the essay writing, clearly her "talk and talk and talk" was not proving helpful, at least for the majority of the students. There was some element of practice in this classroom, in this C of P, that made it difficult for students to learn what they needed to learn now, in grade nine.

First Voice: Agreed. But, do you really think Emily was denying students access to the teacher as a source of knowledge?

> *Other Voice:* Well, not for the same reasons Delpit gives. Delpit attributes the problem to teachers' resistance to exhibit power in the classroom–to be seen as the expert source could be viewed as disempowering one's students. I think Emily's reluctance was more that she had this idea that by helping her students she was babying them, and that would not be doing them a favour.

First Voice: That was obvious with her hand holding comments in the previous section. She was worried about preparing them for high school, though–no one to hold their hand there.

> *Other Voice:* That may be true, but that type of language (for example, hand holding) is not pedagogically useful. Ironically, in her desire to 'prepare' her students for high school, on another level Emily was denying them what they needed in order to be prepared. She needed to meet the

> students where they were, not where they should be–and, to recognize how to contribute to dynamics that bring learning forward. Or to say this another way, there needed to be different practices in this C of P, practices that provided scaffolding to the students and likely the teacher as well.

First Voice: So, in terms of this aspect of our study then–which discourse structures would bring learning forward and expand possibilities for acquisition into an academic discourse?

> *Other Voice:* For the answer to that question, you are going to have to wait for the final chapters. But, you can rest assured that it's going to have something to do with conversations.

First Voice: One more question. You said mushfake Discourse is a partial answer. What's the rest?

> *Other Voice:* Well, according to Gee (1992), 'the rest' involves serious change of the social structure. Mushfake Discourse is, at least, something to do while "waiting for the revolution" (p. 119*)*.

In retrospect, as I look back on this simulated dialogue, I realize that my conversation was a 'mushfake' conversation–I made do with less because the real thing was not available. It had served its purpose, though. "As Bakhtin observed, such discourse is filled with dialogic overtones, for our knowing is part of a joint activity and the understanding we achieve builds on the contributions of others and invites their further response" (Wells, 2001, p. 186). At the same time, it seemed ironic that my dialogue–about oral discourse–appears in written form.

> (T)he writer engages in a dual dialogue: with the audience to whom the text is addressed and with himself through dialogue with the emerging text. By the same token, reading another's text also needs to be undertaken dialogically. In order to understand it, one not only has to interpret the information it presents, but one also has to engage with it responsively, whether in a dialogue with others or in an inner dialogue with oneself. (Wells, 2001, p. 186)

My hope is that this dialogue will lead to others.

Identity Practices

> All good teachers know there is much about identity that is crucial to classrooms. Being a 'successful' student requires identity work. It requires adopting and affiliating with multiple new ways of talking, listening, acting, feeling, responding, interacting, and valuing, as well as writing and reading. All the other identities students bring to the classroom are relevant to whether and how they affiliate with school and its

> characteristic "ways with words" (Heath, 1983). (Gee & Crawford, 1998, p. 225)

In the previous sections of this chapter I examined the ways in which social practices and discursive practices had developed in, and at the same time, been shaped by the language arts community of practice. In this section I further this discussion by means of an inquiry into the identity practices at work in this context. Initially, I found it difficult to approach the study of identity. After all, identity is so multi-faceted, and at the same time somewhat difficult to define. In this regard, Eckert's (2000) comment proved helpful: "While the ethnographer does not have access to identity, we do have access to some of the practices that people attend to in working out their meaning in the community" (p. 42). Toohey (2000) also calls attention to the practice component of identity: "Identity is not best regarded as an individual attribute or acquisition, but rather as the product of specific identity practices" (p. 125).

> From a sociocultural perspective, identities are seen as constructed and reconstructed in activities (practices) in which participants position themselves and are positioned by others. (Toohey, 2000, p. 62)

How did the research participants position themselves? How were they positioned by others? What identities were they offered in this community of practice? How would that change when they left Coalfield School for high school? These were some of the questions I pondered over throughout the course of the research and will discuss in this section.

According to Wenger (1998), "issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social theory of learning and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community, and meaning" (p. 145). He explains that focusing on identity within this context extends the framework in two directions: it narrows the focus onto the person, but from a social perspective, and it expands the focus beyond communities of practice, calling attention to broader processes of identification and social structures. This corresponds to how I was thinking about identity in relation to the research participants. In the first part of this section, I focus on the research participants *within* the Grade 9 language arts C of P, using the notion of socially situated identity to consider how identity is constructed in collaboration with others.[46] In the second part, my discussion shifts to the community of practice of teachers within Coalfield School. In the conclusion, I expand my discussion *beyond* the classroom to consider "broader processes of identification"–how these students were seen by others *beyond* the school community. It will be shown that the other identities students bring to the classroom are indeed relevant to whether and how they affiliate with school.

'This is me in Grade 9, baby' (Socially Situated Identity)

> A person's place in relation to other people, a person's perspective on the rest of the world, a person's understanding of his or her value to others–all of these are integral to the individual's experience of the self, and are constructed in collaboration with others as those others engage in the same construction for themselves. The individual's engagement in the world is a constant process of identity construction–one might most profitably think of identity as a process of engagement (and disengagement). (Eckert, 2000, pp. 41-2)

This is me in Grade 9, baby, this is me in Grade 9.
This is me in Grade 9, baby, this is me in Grade 9.
Grade 9, Barenaked Ladies

Every now and then over the course of the fieldwork, as I sat at the back of the classroom watching the students, I would hear the refrain (above) playing in my head. Being in Grade 9 was significant for the students in my study–in a different manner than for the singer, though. In the song, Grade 9 was the beginning of high school, as can be seen by the first verse, below.

I found my locker and I found my classes
Lost my lunch and I broke my glasses,
That guy is huge! That girl is wailin'!
First day of school and I'm already failing.

For my research participants, Grade 9 was the last year of junior high. This proved to be significant in many respects, influencing the C of P in various ways. As the oldest students in the school, Grade 9s were in a relative position of power, enjoying certain advantages. Dith explained: "We have more control of the school." And, Darith told me: "We're the oldest. No one goes against you. It's good. We're being more mature." However, from early on in the project, it became clear that much about being in Grade 9, for both teachers and students, was related to preparing for Grade 10. That is, it was particularly evident in this Grade 9 class that this C of P, as one aspect of being an 'education' C of P, had a future orientation. Darren explains: "I've spent from day one, two years ago, getting them ready for what we're coming to now, that they understand that they're going into high school." Dylan corroborates this: "You have to work harder than the other grades, 'cause you're trying to get ready for high school." It was almost difficult to think about Grade 9 in isolation, with high school laying in wait just around the corner.

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[46] For a more thorough examination of identity practices, the discussion will include references to the Grade 9 class at large.

Along with the advantages of being in Grade 9, there were drawbacks. Hông, for example, told me: "It's pretty scary, being in Grade 9. It's almost the end of school and then we go on to high school next year. I feel pretty jumpy inside. I kind of want to like go back to Grade 1 or something, where it's easy." Dith also wished he could turn back the clock:

> It's getting harder. Teachers are more picky about stuff. There's more homework, tests, more happening every year. You have to work harder. The things we used to do, we can't do them now–like fooling around and still not having any homework. I want to go back in time. It's just the risk of failing, that's all.

Teachers were pushing students in their attempts to prepare them for high school and they in turn were feeling the pressure. We can see from Dith's comment that some of the established practices of the C of P (e.g. fooling around) were being called into question. From time to time, I found myself wondering who the research participants would be in high school. And, I was not alone in this regard–this question, in different forms, seemed to be on everyone's mind, teachers and students alike. While the focus of my research was on this context, the discourse related to next year helped to clarify what it meant to be in Grade 9. In many respects, the impending transition to high school could be thought of as a huge crack in the community of practice. At the same time, it shed light on identity practices within the existing C of P and helped me to examine the ways in which students' experiences in this class would affect whom they would become in high school and beyond.

Eckert (2000) makes the point that the construction of identity does not happen in isolation. Rather, the process of identity formation is dialogical in nature (Taylor, 1991). Who we are and what we become is tied closely to the social circumstances in which we find ourselves (Ryan, 1999). Who these students were in Grade 9 was, in part, due to their shared membership in the Grade 9 C of P. Through a comparison of two students, Adrena and Sarun, I will begin to demonstrate this point.

Adrena, accustomed to attending schools in which Caucasian students were the majority, found that she was offered a very different identity at Coalfield School. However, as Emily suggests, she would be positioned differently again in high school.

> I look at Adrena–she'll do great next year. Sarun, I worry about. But here, he's in his comfort zone. He's cool, he's the man, and he's doing fine socially, while Adrena's struggling. But, next year I think it's going to be the exact opposite. I think she's going to flower, and he's going to just shrivel up. That's what I see.

What was it about this community of practice that positioned Sarun as 'the man', yet located Adrena as struggling? To begin with, Adrena was a newcomer and her attendance since enrolling at Coalfield School had been irregular. In addition, she was a White female, and some of her ways of being did not conform to established practices for a female in this C of P. For example, she was outspoken, questioning and she expected to interact with boys. For Gutierrez, Rymes and Larson (1995), becoming a member of a community of practice is "a process of developing a particular identity and mode of behaviour; through participation in a community's sociocultural practices, members learn which discourses and forms of participation are valued and not valued by the community" (p. 448). In her attempt to become a member of the C of P, Adrena was certainly learning which practices were valued by this particular community. Her academic standing *seemed* to have little to do with her position, either with the other students or with the teacher. When Emily made the comment that she thought Adrena "would do great next year", she was referring more to social position, and to the different social structures within high school. Adrena herself seems to have a fairly realistic picture of her performance in this respect. How would she describe herself as a student?

> Irresponsible sometimes. I think if I were to spend a little more time being dedicated to my homework, that I'd be a really good student. Like, if I

> wanted I could get into those smart people schools, like Selkirk. But that's way too much pressure... I'm best at creative subjects, where the idea is more important than the follow-through.

Although she saw room for improvement, it was not her academic performance in Grade 9 that concerned Adrena; rather, it was the feeling that she was an outsider. Sarun, on the other hand, was an oldtimer, a Cambodian male, and his behaviour was acceptable for males within this C of P. He was the most vocal boy in the class (this seemed to be more acceptable for males), he had a good sense of humour and he displayed some resistance to authority. As mentioned before, behaviour problems in this class (as compared to other schools) were mild–there were no 'real' bad boys in this class. Sarun did consider himself to be somewhat of a trouble maker, though. When asked to describe a typical school day, Sarun told me: "Usually I just get into trouble. That's typical. Someone will send me to the office for talking in class, while the teacher is talking, or for just lying down, not doing anything." Apparently, I missed the best of this as language arts class was first period in the morning: "Hardly in English 'cause that's the first class and I'm tired out. So I don't do anything, till like after lunch."

Emily had described Sarun as cool. What did being a 'cool' guy mean in this C of P? In his study (mentioned earlier) of adolescent boys in an Australian high school, Martino (2000) found that the boys' rejection of academic achievement and their peer group relations were tied to acting out problematic forms of "cool" masculinity. Many of the boys in Martino's study rejected mental labour and its rewards–"their masculinity is in opposition to the demeanour of a hard-working student" (p. 105). As with Adrena, Emily's comment spoke to Sarun's social standing, not his achievement level. Sarun *was*, however, a poor student. What role, if any, did Sarun's underachievement play in placing him at the top socially? In Martino's study, the underachievers (who were also skilled footballers) wielded most of the power. Unlike the cool guys in Martino's study, though, the boys in my study did not "put down those who work(ed) hard." And, although it was hard to tell by his behaviour in class, Sarun was concerned about his academic progress and how that would affect his prospects for high school.

> I'm not doing well in science this year–it's pretty hard. I don't like handing in my stuff, so I'm behind. I have to pull my weight up, or I won't make it

> into Science 10, cause then I'll be stuck in Science 14, and I don't wanna be stuck there.[47]

Sarun's attitude towards academic success does not appear to be negative, although it may be interpreted that way. Rather, for some reason, he seems unable to learn, to 'take on' at an identity or a practice level, the kinds of behaviour he must engage in to be successful academically.

These brief descriptions of the relative social positions held by Adrena and Sarun emphasise the manner in which identity is socially situated. Gee (1999) defines *'situated identities'* as the "different identities or social positions we enact and recognize in different settings" (p. 12). Adrena certainly recognizes that, for her, the change in schools has resulted in a different social position. In her words: "Sucks to be me." By all accounts, Sarun's turn with this experience would come the following year. The unique ethnic composition at Coalfield School was a crucial factor in the way these positionings functioned. The practices that positioned Sarun and Adrena accordingly in this C of P would not operate the same way next year. Below, Emily further develops her predictions of these two students:

> I made that comment because McKim School doesn't have a big Cambodian/Vietnamese population.[48] Adrena's just going to be in her glory, I think, but Sarun's going to find that he hasn't got so much of a support system in a classroom setting, because they're going to be dispersed. And, he's not the type of guy to shine that way. Outside of the setting where his friends are, I don't think he's macho enough to make a first move to make a friend. That's my impression of him. Then there's Adrena, who'll talk to anybody…And, you know, I think that she'll do really well. Whereas here, I think she wants to be friends with everybody, but they're not necessarily letting her in.

Emily's comparison of the two students emphasises Eckert's (2000) point that "individual identity is not constructed in a vacuum; it is co-constructed with group identities" (p. 42). With Adrena, some of the practices that interfered with her acceptance at Coalfield School (for example, her comfort level with asking questions in class and interacting with boys) would likely serve her well in high school. As for Sarun,

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[47] Science 10 is the academic stream of science in Grade 10, while science 14 is considered the non-academic stream.

[48] McKim is the high school Sarun would be attending.

I hoped that he would shine rather than shrivel in high school. Clearly, though, his social position would shift. While Emily thought of Sarun as 'the man' in this C of P, she does not see him as "macho enough" to make a move out of his comfort zone. Sarun certainly was very much at ease in this context. From my perch at the back of the room, I often heard him humming tunes and singing snippets of songs; I could almost hear him singing, "This is me in Grade 9, baby." His experience outside his comfort zone *within* a school setting was minimal, though. I did not have a conversation with Sarun as to his shifting social position; however, he did share with me some of his feelings as to high school.

> Lynne: So, how do you feel about getting in trouble?
>
> Sarun: It's not bad, it's ok, 'cause I'm used to it. But, people say if I do it in high school, I'll be out the door pretty fast.
>
> Lynne: And, what do you think about that?
>
> Sarun: It scares me, 'cause it's high school, it's *different*. It's a big problem.
>
> Lynne: What's your of idea of high school?
>
> Sarun: Big kids running all over the place, trying to get to classes. I don't know how I'll get to class. It's SO huge. But, I'm going to have to get used to it, 'cause I'm gonna be in high school.

Sarun's description of what he thinks high school will be like sounds a bit like the one in the Barenaked Ladies' song. His status as a troublemaker seems to be somewhat in jeopardy–he has the idea that what he can get away with in this context will not be tolerated in the next. Speculating as to who Sarun would be in high school reminded me that "…practices being dynamic and situated, identities evanesce in time and shift with respect to context" (Toohey, 2000, p. 62). As I fast forwarded to Grade 10, I wondered if he would be singing a different tune–perhaps *King of Spain*, by Moxy Fruvous: "Once I was the King of Spain, Now I'm eating humble pie." Would 'the man', without his support system, be eating humble pie in high school? How these students were situated in Grade 9 and the identities they held had much to do with the group of which they were part. Naturally, there were individual differences amongst students and I have pointed out that students within this C of P tended to affiliate along ethnic lines.

Was it reasonable, then, to talk about a 'male identity' for the boys in the class? Adrena thought so. However, I noticed some inconsistencies in the way she spoke about them. For example, during the interviews Adrena sometimes spoke about the

'Cambodian guys', while at other times she referred to the boys in the class collectively. I questioned her about this.

> Lynne: Okay, and then the guys in the class–you've often referred to them as the Cambodian guys, but there are some boys in there that aren't Cambodian.
>
> Adrena: Oh, they're in there, too!
>
> Lynne: Could you say a little bit more on that?
>
> Adrena: Justin and Dylan are the two White guys in our class, and they're typical guys.
>
> Lynne: Okay, what's a typical guy?
>
> Adrena: A typical guy, that's hard. Everyone has a different expectation of a guy. But, the expectation of the guys in the school is–they play sports, they hang out with other guys, and they treat the girls like shit. That's the impression I've gotten since I've been here. And, Dylan and Justin fit right into that category.

Not to suggest that Adrena is an authority on male identity, but the boys in the class did seem to have developed a strong group identity, more so than had the girls. In terms of Adrena's description of a 'typical guy', a further parallel can be made to Martino's study in which the role of homosociality–"the requirement for boys to socialize with one another"– is emphasised (p. 109).

Clearly, the boys in my study met this requirement. However, in Martino's study, alongside the immutable rule for boys to "get along with other guys" was the need to be popular with girls. In this respect, the boys in my study did not follow suit. As for Adrena's 'treating girls like shit' comment, one wonders if she simply meant they ignore her (which is not what she wants). The section on gender showed that the boys avoided girls; in any case, they did not *appear* to be concerned with being popular with the girls. For example, Lori, the student teacher, told me that she had asked a group of the guys why they never hung out with the girls. Their response was, "because we're cool and there are no cool girls here at this school." Lori's reply was that the girls were going to find other guys and leave them behind. Their answer was that they did not care because they had each other. The boys' identity practices appeared to be working for them in this context. But, how would the identities constructed for Sarun (and cohorts) in this C of P affect who they would be in high school? There are reasons to suggest that they may face some challenges of a social nature. What about the academic component of school?

In her description of a 'typical guy,' neither does Adrena make any reference to the boys' academic achievement. This C of P shaped academic as well as behavioural practices, though. We saw, earlier, that most of the boys in this class were not strong academic students. Rather, practices towards schoolwork tended to result in underachievement. How much of this was related to the group identity for boys? Emily thought it was a factor. For example, during a discussion about student progress, she made the following comment about Justin: "The problem with Justin is that he thinks he knows everything. He thinks he's really smart and does not have to do any work, whereas if he was at a regular school, he'd be in a different position." What does Emily mean by a 'regular' school? I did not ask, but having taught at small schools on the reserve, I thought I understood. At the same time, I resisted her comment which to me said that he could think he was 'smart' here, amongst these students (who were not). Justin had attended Coalfield School since kindergarten–how had that shaped the way he engaged with school? Although she does not say it, the suggestion is there that next year Justin, too, will find out otherwise (what: that he is not 'smart', or that he has to work?). As Gee and Crawford (1998) pointed out, "Being a 'successful' student requires identity work" (p. 225). With one notable exception, these boys did not identify with being 'successful' students.

Interestingly, this exception was a boy in the class who did not meet all the 'typical guy' criteria, yet managed to be 'one of the boys' nonetheless. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) note that, with the concept of communities of practice, gender researchers can fruitfully focus on "people's active engagement in the reproduction of or resistance to gender arrangements in their communities" (p. 466). It has been shown that, in this community of practice, the majority of the students were actively engaging in the reproduction of gender arrangements. However, there were students who resisted these (and other) classroom norms.[49] Hông, for example, did not follow the characteristic practice for males in the classroom regarding schoolwork. Emily explains how Hông has broken with community practice:

> There's a long running history in the school that it's not cool for guys to do a good job. You look at someone like Hông and you admire him because

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[49] This theme will be explored further in the chapter on disrupting community practices.

> he's stood above that and said, "Well, I don't want to make my living having a $6 an hour job. I want to do something with my life."[50]

In his interview, Hông told me that he was a different kind of student than his friends: "I'm independent. I usually get my work done and they don't. I like good grades; they like sports." Hông's departure from gender expectations had not seemed to have had an adverse effect on his status as "one of the guys." Rather than becoming a 'target' (as did the achievers in Martino's study), he was an accepted member of the C of P. That he was an 'oldtimer' likely was a significant factor. Moreover, as a good student, Hông filled an important role in the sub-community of male students in the C of P: "I try to encourage others to get their work done and stuff like that." We will see later the lengths that Hông will go to fulfill this role. Below, he shares his opinion as to the way in which Sarun's social practices interfere with his academic progress:

> I don't think Sarun thinks that school's not important, but he gets carried away in class talking to his friends and stuff and at home he seldom does his homework or he says he doesn't. It shows on tests and stuff like that.

Without his close network of friends, it seems likely that Sarun's identity as 'the man' will shift. Given the non-productive achievement practices for a 'typical boy' in this C of P, one wonders if there may be a constructive aspect to the prospective change. After all, Sarun's identity did not include being a good student. Yet, the long-term social relationships these boys share have supported and sustained them in important ways. Have they, in other ways, compromised their chances for academic success? They seem to have played a role in doing so in *this* class. Had this C of P prepared them for academic success in high school? The answer to that question remains to be seen, but the section on discourse practices seems to suggest otherwise.

What about the girls? What was the identity of a 'typical' girl in this C of P? I do not have a lot to add, beyond what was introduced in the section on gender. 'Typical girls' were quiet, worked hard, and for the most part, were making reasonable academic progress. Clearly, in this class, Adrena was not a 'typical girl.' Ironically, some of the practices that interfered with her acceptance in the C of P (for example, her comfort level with asking questions in class) were conducive to the shared goal of learning language arts. With hard work, though, the other girls were getting by. With the exception of Adrena, the girls have received less attention than the boys in this discussion concerning identity practices. Perhaps one explanation for this is that no one seemed to be concerned about the girls in quite the same way. In a conversation as to how he thought his students would do the following year, Darren made the comment that "the girls are going to be fine, my Asian girls will be fine."[51] But, having worked with students who had experienced a major transition in schools before, I was worried.

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[50] Emily is speaking for Hông here; however, we will hear him talk about what he wants to do with his life at the end of the chapter. Emily also mentioned that "Kim's the same, so I think that somehow comes from home." Kim and Hông are cousins.

In this regard, Harklau's (2000) study of immigrant students in the U.S. (*From the Good Kids to the Worst)* was relevant–she utilizes the transition from secondary to postsecondary education as a means of illuminating *identity in movement* and the changing identity categories encountered when crossing institutional settings. The initial purpose of her study was to describe how one group of U.S. immigrant students negotiated the changing academic and linguistic demands of the transition from secondary to postsecondary education. As the study progressed, Harklau

> found that the very same ESL students who had been considered 'the good kids' in high school, the ones praised and admired by their teachers, subsequently came to be characterized as underachieving and difficult students in their college ESL classes. I found that the ways in which the students' identities were constructed in these two different educational institutions played a crucial role in students' transition from high school to college. (p. 36)

Reading about the students in Harklau's study made me think of the research participants from my study as they prepared to leave Coalfield School for various high schools across the city. Although the students in my study were moving from junior to senior high, parallels can be drawn.

My particular interest in examining transition from one educational context to another as a means of illuminating *identity in movement* can be traced to my teaching experiences at band-run schools on the reserve. When I began my fieldwork at Coalfield

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[51] Darren emphasised the Asian girls here as he had been expressing concern about the Aboriginal female students who had dropped out. The white girls, as relative newcomers, were not taken into consideration in his remarks.

School, I saw little similarity between it and the schools in which I had taught. Over time, though, I began to see many similarities, the theme of transition a particularly pertinent one for the research participants. My last teaching position before beginning graduate school was at a small band-run school on a reserve. I taught Grade 5/6 there for five years; when my students completed Grade 6, they attended junior high school in the nearby town. As with the research participants in my study (in particular, those who were oldtimers), for my former students, the transition from band school on the reserve to junior high entailed major changes. Like Harklau, I learned that "learners' identities affected their experience in school" (p. 37). Similarly, from the perspective Lave and Wenger (1991) have developed, "learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: They are aspects of the same phenomenon" (p. 115). In her literature review, Harklau refers to researchers who have drawn variously from critical theory, social practice, and poststructural approaches to understand teaching and learning. As a teacher working on the reserve, I had never heard of critical theory, poststructuralism or the construct of *learner identity*. I may have lacked the theoretical language to articulate what my students experienced; however, I did have some sense of "how schools categorize and position students with identities" and "how students accommodate, resist, and counter identities imposed on them" (p. 37).

I, too, had seen students go from being the "good kids" to "the worst", as they moved from the community school on the reserve to junior high in town. Charles and Cara present the most powerful example.[52] I taught Charles, and later his sister, Cara, for two years each. In a dozen years of teaching, Cara was my highest achieving student, and Charles was also a very strong academic student. Both students did their homework regularly, studied for exams and were active participants in the school's cultural program. Behaviour problems were non-existent. In the four years they were in my class, neither parent missed a parent-teacher conference. Cara's mother traveled to Alberta with the class as a chaperone when we went on a week-long cultural exchange trip. Of the many "good kids" in my classes, they were among "the best." Shortly before leaving for graduate school, I met with administration and counseling personnel at the junior high school to discuss former students. I was both shocked and dismayed to learn that not only were both Charles and Cara failing, but that they were known as trouble-makers. Cara had recently been caught lighting fires in the girls' washroom. They had become amongst "the worst." How had this happened? I will attempt to answer this at the end of chapter.

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[52] These names have been changed.

In doing so, I will also explore why I felt I had reason to worry about the research participants–even the girls, despite the fact that they were hard-working, high-achieving (in some cases) and praised by their teachers. How is it that Emily can predict that Sarun will wither next year and Adrena can proclaim with confidence that the boys are going to go through hell in high school? In the conclusion to this chapter I examine the phenomenon that, although no one can say just how this will happen, it is 'known' that next year is going to be 'different.'[53] Before turning my attention to the ways in which structural racism disadvantages certain groups, I devote a section of 'identity practices' to the community of practice of teachers at Coalfield School.

'A Work in Progress' (Being a Teacher)

> Peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more or less engaged and–inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. Changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 35-36)

I introduced the section on identity practices with the following: "All good teachers know there is much about identity that is crucial to classrooms. Being a 'successful' student requires identity work" (Gee & Crawford, 1998, p. 225). Naturally, being a 'successful' teacher requires identity work, as well. In this chapter, I have described in detail the Grade 9 language arts class as a community of practice. Emily was a member of this C of P. However, as the teacher, she was positioned differently than the students, who had shared tasks in the C of P.[54] That is, she also embeds herself in a different C of P, that of teachers. Although my focus remains the Grade 9 C of P, in this part of *identity practices* I consider teacher identity. Gee's discussion of Discourse(s), as well as Lave and Wenger's communities of practice helped me to reflect upon what it meant to 'be a teacher' at Coalfield School. A comment made by Emily during one of our interviews provided the impetus for this aspect of my inquiry.

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[53] There is the hope that we will all be proven wrong.

[54] In a C of P, the 'master,' or in this case the 'teacher', is a member of the C of P, but not really an 'equal' member for his/her position includes either knowledge or power (or both) that the other participants seek.

The solving of the 'discussion mystery' made quite an impression on me. I was fascinated by the way in which the C of P had shaped Emily's teaching practice. Curious, I asked Emily whether teaching at Coalfield School had changed her in other ways. Once again, she surprised me:

> Oh, yeah, lots. For example, when I taught at Errington School, it was a really negative environment, and I think the teachers, including myself, were negative, and really sort of anti-kid, and we'd get into the staff room, and there'd just be a lot of really negative talk. I think it ended up being a coping mechanism, with a lot of humour surrounding different students, and stuff. And, then, what I noticed here is that there's none of that talk in the staff room around kids.

The class had shaped Emily's practice, but her identity as a teacher was constructed primarily in collaboration with others teachers. I realized that Emily was being shaped as well by the C of P of teachers at Coalfield School. With the 'like pulling teeth' situation in the classroom, Emily had entered a C of P in which discourse practices were well established. With the staff, Emily, a relative newcomer, once again found herself getting absorbed into a C of P that had already been in progress for some time before her arrival. Emily did not elaborate as to what was entailed in her coming to know that, at Coalfield School, kid bashing was not acceptable. With classroom discourse practices, she gradually stopped trying to initiate discussions after her attempts repeatedly met silence. I can only speculate as to the process involved in her change to become a teacher who did not engage in anti-kid talk.

In this sense, language is a practice totally inter-related with other behavioural practices, not separate from them. Thus as people 'work' in a C of P, they learn the discourse of the C of P. What had happened in the staff room? What shape had her apprenticeship into the community of practice of teachers taken? Jordan (1989) argues that learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants.[55] One thing is clear: for Emily to be accepted into the teacher C of P (or, using Gee's term, Discourse), she had to give up kid bashing. This meant learning how to be silent, as well as how to talk. One can imagine Emily's explanation: "I was silenced because I didn't know the appropriate way to talk about kids in this staff room."

Lave and Wenger (1991) distinguish between *talking about* and *talking within* a practice. Talking within a practise includes both talking within (e.g., exchanging information necessary to the progress of ongoing activities) and talking about (e.g., stories, community lore).[56] It is this aspect of discourse and practice I will focus on. In the section on discourse practices, I considered discourse practices *within* the C of P. But, Emily used two discourses: one *with* the students and one *about* the students.

Speaking to the latter, Emily needed to be appropriated into a different discourse. We have seen in previous sections that, on occasion, Emily used language that was perhaps not pedagogically appropriate such as, "babying" or "hand holding." The teacher discourse practices at Coalfield School were obviously different than those with which Emily was familiar. This also speaks to 'teacher identity'–to belong at Errington School meant engaging in the practice of kid bashing. In a different setting, Emily had to learn that this was no longer an accepted practice. Like Adrena, she was faced with the choice of either engaging in the reproduction of or the resistance to community practices. Unlike Adrena (who often chose resistance), Emily chose to change her discourse practices to fit in with expectations of the Coalfield staff. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that "for newcomers then the purpose is not to learn *from* talk as a substitute for legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn *to* talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation" (p. 109).[57]

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[55] See Lave and Wenger (1991, pp. 107-108) for a discussion regarding Jordan's study of the apprenticeship of Yucatec midwives.

[56] For a detailed explanation regarding discourse within a C of P, see Lave and Wenger (1991, pp. 105-109).

[57] With the student participants, I made the point earlier that they needed to learn *from* talk, in addition to learning *to* talk.

> And so my attitude has had to change a lot, you know. I think that's why I like it here, it sort of keeps me on track. So, a work in progress. I mean, three years of that is hard to just, well, forget.

Not surprisingly, the changes in attitude and language practices did not happen at once; rather, the process was gradual. Gee (1992) explains that if, in a given Discourse, you get too much "out of line", the Discourse will "discipline" you and "put you back in line" (p. 88). I wondered if some type of "discipline" had been part of Emily's learning process. Regardless, the discourse practices at Coalfield School positioned her differently–the normative structure works to silence some and make communication available to others.

> Discourse positions the subject in a dual way: in relation to what and how something is said and in relation to a community that makes particular practices possible and others unavailable. (Britzman, 1991, p. 17)

As her students needed to be acquired by/into academic discourse, Emily as well needed to be acquired into a new discourse community. In this regard, it appeared that Emily was more favourably positioned than her students in terms of having the type of learning she needed made socially available to her. It was as if there was an invisible sign posted in the staff room–no kid bashing allowed. How had this come about? How had positive discourse practices and attitudes become the norm at Coalfield School? Emily attributes this, at least in part, to the principal:

> Through Ruth's leadership, you realize why you're here, and why you're a teacher, whereas I think in three years at Errington School I lost sight of that. And, then the other staffs I was on were large staffs, and bigger junior highs, and you never really got to feel any camaraderie, whereas here you feel it a lot. And, we know why we're teaching.

Along with the leadership at the school, Emily credits two other interconnected reasons: the small size of the school, and the camaraderie amongst the staff. The small size of the school contributed to its 'community feel.' For example, Lori, accustomed to schools in Toronto, described Coalfield School accordingly:

> You know what, I think it seems like such a nice community, the school community. Like on the PA in the morning when they'll say, congratulations to, you know, Steven, and everyone knows who Steven is. They don't have to actually say his last name. Even everyone in the class–they all know who each other is. Like, that's really nice. And, the teachers

> seem to really respect the kids. They don't talk down to them, for one thing, not at all.

Lori's most recent field experience had been in a school of 2,400 students–no wonder Coalfield School seemed like a nice community school. Interestingly, Lori's remark sounded so much like Emily's comment, "That's what I like about this community. You all know each other so well." (made long before Lori's arrival). And, while the school comprised a 'nice community' in many respects, we learned earlier that not everyone experienced the school this way–there were cracks beneath the surface. Apparently, though, the school was a lot 'nicer' than it had been three years earlier when Ruth was hired as principal. Due to various circumstances, she was the fourth principal that year.

> The school had actually become a fairly high-risk area. There was a high level of racial graffiti on the buildings, and racial tensions within the school. There was violence, kids being bullied in the bathrooms, that sort of thing. The staff didn't feel safe. The students didn't feel safe. And, the community felt like the school was a really rough place, and it wasn't a first choice school for very many families. My priority in that first year was safety of staff and students.[58]

This description did not match the Coalfield School with which I was familiar, nor did it sound like the one Emily had described. During my interview with Ruth, I mentioned Emily's anti-kid comment. She explained that, in her opinion "what is perceived to be kid bashing in fact is 'other' bashing…I think that when that exists it's really destructive." How had Ruth managed to create a more positive environment, one in which students and teachers felt safe and teachers' discourse practices did not allow kid bashing?

> What I try to do is sort of back up and try to touch the spot in people's hearts that first made them decide that they wanted to be a teacher, and what was it about their lives, and their experiences that made them think

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[58] Ruth then went on to explain that the next priority was to look "at bringing in staff who had a lot of special needs training. The focus of the school had been on ESL students, but as the clientele changed and became more students who had been born in Canada, then other needs became more apparent. While second language was still an issue in terms of background, that was complicated by all sorts of social factors, so we looked at hiring staff who had special ed backgrounds." The decision will be discussed in the final chapter.

> that teaching would be a good way to live your life, and try to make that a reality.

I do not have extensive data in this regard–after all, this was not the focus of my study. However, if teachers like Darren and Emily are representative of the staff, Ruth had indeed touched that spot in a number of teachers' hearts.

> A lot of it is realizing that not just in terms of math learning that you take kids from where they are, and just as when I have one-on-ones with teachers, I tell them, you know, that my job is to take them from where they are and move things forward. And that's what we have to do with parents, and with the community, and with everybody, and that's what I expect staff to do with me, to take me from where I am and move me forward.

This brought to mind the notion of master-apprentice relations within Lave and Wenger's formulation of a C of P. Hanks (1991) explains that "the master's effectiveness at producing learning is not dependent on her ability to inculcate the student with her own conceptual representations. Rather, it depends on her ability to manage effectively a division of participation that provides for growth on the part of the student" (p. 21). Unlike apprenticeships with one master and one apprentice, the learning in these relationships was distributed. Ruth felt strongly that "there has to be real shared leadership. It has to be a collegial leadership. I think the foundation has to be respect for everybody as learners, ourselves and everybody else." This takes into consideration Lave and Wenger's notion of 'legitimate peripheral participants' learning from each other and the social context in which they find themselves. Still, the master is the person who 'really knows' that which the student is trying to learn/acquire. Ruth's description of her approach to working with teachers called to mind what I had been trying to first figure out and then explain in the section on discourse practices. Similarly, the teacher's job should be to take the students from where they are and move them forward. In terms of academic discourse, did Emily 'really know' that which her students were trying to learn/acquire?

Here I need to distinguish between the C of P in which Emily lived as a teacher, and the C of P into which she is trying to appropriate students. I wondered if, in addition to the role of the 'like pulling teeth' issue in shaping the discourse practices, there was another possible reason as to why the discourse was not (satisfactorily) acquiring the students. If you recall, Emily was a physical education teacher. She had had no language arts methods courses as part of her teacher education program. I did not make the connection at the time, but perhaps Emily had not fully completed an 'apprenticeship' with people who had mastered the Discourse. Did she need to be acquired by the language arts teacher discourse community? Was she well positioned to be able to initiate her students into the community of practice?

I am not sure of the answers to these questions; I am merely offering possibilities in an attempt to understand the situation. Countless teachers face teaching subjects (and students) that they have not been adequately prepared for (in some way or another). I remember my horror (having just completed teacher preparation in an elementary program), arriving for my first teaching job in an isolated Aboriginal community to find out that I would be teaching Grades 7-10 instead of Grades 5-6 (which is what I had been hired to teach). This is not to suggest that teachers who teach in areas other than those of their particular expertise necessarily do a poor job, nor the reverse. Rather, I am trying to make sense of the dynamics of *this* context. Why was Emily more comfortable teaching science than language arts, for example?

It is important to note here that Emily was attending language arts in-service sessions during the course of the research project.[59] The person offering these sessions was a 'master' language arts teacher. Emily spoke highly of these sessions (and the person teaching them), and on several occasions she used ideas from this source in her teaching (sometimes changing her plan on short notice after attending a session). These sessions were extremely helpful to Emily's practice and point to the increasing need for in-service training in various areas. *Perhap*s Emily needed to be more completely appropriated into the C of P of language arts teachers before she could more expertly take her students them from where they were and move them forward. The essay writing example presented in discourse practices can be used to illustrate this point. When I was trying to make sense of those data, I contacted a fellow graduate student who, in addition to being a writer, has extensive experience teaching the writing process to junior high students (and language arts methods course to prospective teachers). I asked her to read and respond to the interview transcripts. The following is part of her response:

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[59] These in-service sessions were related to the new language arts curriculum. One 'lead' teacher from each school attended the sessions.

> I think you have to teach kids to write from the heart, to create a safe space to express themselves authentically–and when they find their voices and develop some trust, then you can…show them the kinds of essay structures they might use. I feel that essay structures are highly overrated anyway–most of the good essay writing that is being done now doesn't follow such a strict format–not that we don't have to learn it–just that it isn't the end and the epitome of writing. Way too many teachers spend too much time on beating such formats into their kids' heads–and make them hate writing and lose self-confidence in their ability to write as a result. There are two main reasons for this, in my opinion. One is the diploma and achievement exams that act as a spectre for all instruction and secondly (and probably most importantly) the teacher doesn't understand the writing process herself and clings to a structure that seems 'teachable' (and blames the kids when it doesn't work). I know about clinging to structures in an area that you aren't familiar with as I have done that in French and also in science. (Marie Anderson,[60] in email correspondence, July 2002)

Emily had devoted time early in the school year for kids to 'write from the heart.' They had done a fair amount of journal writing. As mentioned earlier, Emily really enjoyed reading their writing, especially since many of them were reluctant to speak up in class. It was how she learned about their ideas, which she found "amazing" (while their mechanics were "not the best"). I had read some of this work and understood what she meant. Unfortunately, I did not see Emily 'teach' this type of writing; shortly after I began the research, the 'preparation for the final exam/high school' teaching of writing began. "Beating formats into kids' heads" does sound a bit like Emily's description (in discourse practices) of teaching essay writing: "Even with these essays that they did recently–this is like their third or fourth essay, and they've had the same format, and some of them still aren't doing it."

More importantly, though, are the reasons Marie poses for why she thinks this happens. I have mentioned the achievement exams already. For Grade 9 students, these exams were especially significant as they played a role in whether students would be placed in English 10 or English 13. And, essay writing held a prominent place in the exam. Data shows that preparing for these exams was a factor in the Grade 9 class; however, from various conversations Emily and I had over the course of the research, I would say that Emily placed far less importance on these exams than did many teachers (despite the reality that many of her students had 'entered the game late').

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[60] The name has been changed.

My reading of Emily in this regard is that she had a realistic and pragmatic stance towards the achievement exams. She did feel that she was obliged to prepare them as best she could, though–hence, teaching the students to write essays. In my opinion, the second reason that Marie puts forth–the teacher doesn't understand the writing process herself and clings to a structure that seems 'teachable'–speaks to Emily. Clearly, she was trying to inculcate the students with the essay format. As a P.E. teacher, she may not have been particularly knowledgeable about the writing process. Marie, whose identity (both personal and professional) is strongly intertwined with 'being a writer', knows all about clinging to structures when she has to teach a subject that she is unfamiliar with, though–in her case, science.

How did Emily identify as a teacher? Although her training and first teaching experiences were as a P.E. teacher, she did not want her colleagues at Coalfield School to know she had been a P.E. teacher.[61] The year I conducted the research, Emily taught social studies and science, in addition to language arts. Several comments made by Emily over the course of the year indicated that she was more comfortable in her identity as a science teacher than as a language arts teacher. I took Emily up on her invitation to visit the science class (where "they're never just sitting reading."). The following is a journal reflection, written after my first visit.

Journal reflection, November 12, 1999

Part way during the class, Emily asked me if I noticed any difference in student-student interaction (acknowledging that I had not seen much yet). I responded with a tentative yes. But, no wonder–they were working on a group activity. What I've observed in LA so far has been typing at the computer, writing a quiz and reading a chapter! She told me that she finds science more fun to teach than language arts. So, on the way out after class, I asked her, "What would make LA more fun?" She said: "I like the subject, but it's not as interactive, as hands on. It's not as easy to sit down and ask a kid what they did on

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[61] This was because, since becoming a mother, Emily no longer wanted to coach team sports.

the weekend when they are reading." Of course, I have many buts and questions to this. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to bring some of them up over the next few months.

In retrospect, I can say that I did not pay enough attention to these comments at the time–perhaps because I identify as a language arts teacher (one who has always found teaching language arts "fun"). This insight provided me with two significant 'learnings.'

Emily had trouble organizing instructional discourse in language arts, but she knew how to do this in science. More importantly though, this aspect of the research emphasised that the discussions I had anticipated as I began the research project were not necessarily the most appropriate way for these particular students to learn.[62] The following journal reflection, written after a later visit to the science class, shows my tentative thinking as to this topic:

Journal reflection, May 1, 2000
Ok, I think I'm beginning to get it (why Emily likes teaching science more than language arts). When I visited the science class today, the students were making periscopes. They had a photocopied plan and were all to get a piece of coloured bristol board. Emily told them that they could only have one piece, that "if you mess up, too bad." After she had explained the instructions, I wrote in my fieldnotes: "This assignment looks pretty challenging to me–just the kind of assignment I would find difficult." I found myself thinking back to that geometry class back when I was teaching Grade 2 in Alert Bay. I had the kids making geometric shapes (for example, hexagons and octagons). I will never forget it–how Rufus (who had struggled with every aspect of the curriculum to that point) was helping Kelly (who had taught himself to read at age four from the TV guide and had skipped Grade 1). With this kind of hands-on visually oriented task, Kelly just didn't 'get it', but the assignment was a breeze for Rufus. And, what I remember most is how very proud Rufus was; I saw a side to him that math class that I had never seen before. Of course, I was not reading the literature on 'socially situated identity' at the time, but that's how I think about this in retrospect (almost as if I was observing different identities for different contexts). At one point in the class, I mentioned to Emily that this was the kind of assignment where some kids who don't do as well in other things perform really well. She agreed right away, mentioning that she'd got the idea for the assignment from a science book she bought, and that she often gets recycled materials from the market for making projects. She told me "the ones who are 'book smart' often have trouble with assignments like this and that she really loves seeing the 'underdog' succeed." Thinking back to Rufus, I knew exactly what she meant.

Of the research participants, Dith came to mind. Dith was not a strong academic student. His marks in English and math were very poor; gym and science were his favourite subjects. During the interview, Dith told me that "science is fun. I like making projects, testing out things, testing your knowledge out, seeing how much you learned and how you learned." Dith was not the only student who had mentioned how much he liked science and, in particular, hands-on learning. His comments correspond to an aspect of what was involved, for Emily, in 'being a teacher' at Coalfield School. The following summary, written after my first visit to the science class, introduces my point.

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[62] The implications of these two 'learnings' will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Fieldnotes, November 26, 1999

The room looked pretty basic to me for a science class–various supplies of some sort or another, but certainly not a science 'lab.' I'm wondering if this is typical for a junior high, or if this is one more way in which this 'inner-city' school is impoverished (in comparison). The Grade 9 class is small, but with 30 Grade 7s in this room, it must get very crowded.

As it happened, I found out just how 'typical' this science classroom was a few months later. In the meantime, Emily had mentioned on more than one occasion that the science 'lab' fell short in certain respects. I broached this topic during the interview:

> Yeah, the science lab itself is really weak, and so I find that some of the stuff that the Grade 9s have to know for the diploma exam, I don't have the equipment I need to give them a visual, or to allow them to do it in a hands-on context. So, that's frustrating because I think about how they would learn it better as opposed to reading it in the textbook, which is what they have to do, and listening to me talk. I guess I'm sort of lucky because my husband teaches high school science, and so I get stuff from him, too.

I understood what Emily was talking about. During the winter term, in my role as university facilitator, I began supervising students teachers. Like Coalfield School, the school I had been assigned to was an elementary-junior high school in the public school district. Unlike the research site, though, Campcreek School was in an affluent area of the city and housed several special programs, including an academic challenge program and a Mandarin bilingual program. It was with interest that, on my initial visit to Campcreek School, I realized that this was my first significant exposure to 'such a school', as a student, a teacher or a researcher. I had attended small rural schools, taught in band-run schools on the reserve, and conducted research projects in inner-city schools.

Journal reflection March 20, 2000

I found myself making comparisons, none so dramatic, though, as the day I observed one of my students teach a Grade 8 science class, an introductory lesson to the use of microscopes. Having observed Emily teach science, I could not get over the difference in the science rooms. In Emily's class, the students were seated at four large, bare tables. There was one sink at the front of the room, and another at the side of the room. There was a long side counter which was covered with boxes of supplies–this was no science lab. In contrast, the class in which I observed the student teacher was just that– each two students shared a mini-lab, complete with sink and bunsen burner. That day, each pair of students had a microscope. I found myself imagining Dith and Sarun in that class, with those microscopes… I was used to teaching at band schools on the reserve (housed, ironically, in abandoned residential schools) which were very poorly equipped. But, these schools were both in the same school district! And, the students who attended them took the same exams at the end of the year (the results of which were ranked and published in the newspaper). I can imagine how incredibly frustrating that must be for Emily, and the other teachers in similar contexts!

If this was frustrating for Emily, what was it like for the students? Would they know what they were missing, though? During a conversation with a senior administrator who was visiting the school, Emily had expressed her concerns about the state of the science lab. She had received the following in reply: "It doesn't matter because they don't know the difference." But, whether or not they would know is beside the point. Needless to say, the differences between the two labs will sharply influence the 'discourse' that occurs within them. This was not just a matter of it being frustrating; it was a matter of the absences shaping the discourse practices available in the school. In 'discourse practices' I explained how many of Emily's students were not on a 'level playing field' when it came to the type of English language proficiency that is needed for academic success. This seemed to be one more way in which, for these students, the playing field was not level. I continue this theme in the conclusion to the chapter. But, there were plusses as well–the reverse side of the coin–for both teachers and students). Along with what Emily found positive as a teacher, were advantages for the students:

> …just the things that are in place for the students here to help them, and they don't even know how lucky they have it. For example, the reading stuff that goes on, the number of different supports for families if they need it. The school counselor does a great job with the intake process in finding out what reading level the students are at. All these things that I've never seen before, at the other schools I've been at.

And, teachers, who, while not perfect, *knew why they were teaching*. Despite the many challenges to working in an 'inner-city school,' with students whose provincial exam scores were very close to last place on the list, for the teachers I met at Coalfield School, *teaching was a good way to live their lives.*

Heart of the City (Leveling the Playing Field)

> ...communities of practice don't form freely and randomly in social space. The kinds of situations that people find themselves in, their needs, the kinds of responses they tend to have to these situations and needs, and the kinds of people and resources available to engage in these responses with, will vary depending on where they live in society. And it is the collection of types of communities at different places in society that ultimately constitutes the assemblage of practice that is viewed as class culture, ethnic culture, gender practice, etc. (Eckert, 2000, p. 39)

In the previous sections of this chapter, I examined the Grade 9 (language arts) classroom (as a) community of practice. In the conclusion to this chapter, in order to answer the question, "How is it 'known' that next year is going to be 'different' for these students?" I move beyond the classroom and school communities of practice to call "attention to broader processes of identification and social structures" (Wenger, 1998, p. 145*)*. Freed's (1999) study of communities of practice and pregnant women enabled me to see the way in which the C of P framework could illuminate this aspect of my study. Freed explains that her first reaction to considering the communities of practice framework for her work was to reject the usefulness of the model as pregnant women in her study did not appear to be a 'community of practice'–they showed no signs of having been engaged in common activities, and there were few linguistic and social commonalities among them. Later, when she focused on the communities of practice with which pregnant woman interact, she realized how much the framework could contribute to her analysis: "What pregnant women in fact share is the fairly uniform perception and stereotyped expectations that other communities have of them when they are pregnant" (p. 258).[63] Freed found that consideration of the notion of community of practice ultimately leads to a variety of important insights about women and their stories of pregnancy. "Most significantly, it becomes apparent, from analyzing these stories, that others routinely construct for women what their pregnancy is to consist of, often trying to make of it a monolithic experience–whether or not this coincides with the pregnant woman's own experience" (p. 263).

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[63] These communities were comprised of doctors, health professionals, and family members.

What insights could be gleaned from thinking about the research participants in this regard? A particular incident provided the catalyst for me to think about what 'others' routinely construct for these students. The following article appeared in the local newspaper the day after the Grade 9 class, along with junior high students from two other 'inner-city' schools, had attended a sports camp at the nearby university.[64]

> Levelling the playing field
>
> **College athletes give inner-city kids tips on sports, life**
>
> Sportall raises money to pay sports registration fees for poor families.
>
> Rith Chan thinks big.
>
> So what if he's only four-foot-five? That doesn't stop him from playing a sport for giants.
>
> "I love basketball," Rith said at Friday's Sportall camp at the university. "Basketball is just my favourite sport and I wanted to learn more about the skills and what I could do better and what I could learn from the university students."
>
> And so what if Rith, 12, goes to an "inner-city" school, where many students are not considered to be university bound?
>
> "Probably I'll get a doctor's degree," he said with all the self-assurance in the world.
>
> ...Usually Sportall raises money for kids whose families can't afford to pay sports registration fees. Volunteer Harry Vriends, a recently graduated university student, organized the Sportall Day to give students a glimpse of the campus's top-quality facilities and find some role models among the athletes.

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[64] In the interest of confidentiality, the name of the organization as well as the names of people mentioned have been changed and the name of the newspaper has been omitted.

> "If you want to be a doctor, if you want to be a lawyer, if you want to be a teacher, if you want to be a nurse, you come to university," Vriends told the students before they headed off to their various sports.
>
> The camp is another way for Sportall to level the playing field, said Wayne Sanderson , provincial director of the non-profit society. "We just want to make sure everyone has the same opportunities."

'So what' if Rith goes to an "inner-city" school?[65] How did the many people who read this article respond to that question? As with the article and letter related to the anti-racism assembly, I found myself wondering how I would have read this piece had I been removed from the context. That I knew some of the students who were represented in the story caused me to regard the article differently. What would the students think about the way in which they had been represented? As the article appeared while I was in the midst of interviewing students, I decided to ask. First, I had the students describe the day. They had participated in various activities, including volleyball, soccer, track and field, weightlifting, football, swimming and basketball and all reported to have enjoyed the sports camp. Next, I showed the students the article, read the headline and asked, "What does the term 'inner-city' mean to you?" The following are examples of typical responses:

> Nouy: Inner-city? I'm not sure. Is it like one word? Inside the city or something?
>
> Sarun: Inner-city? I don't really have a meaning for it. I heard it before, though.
>
> Kim: Inner-city? Middle age teens? I don't know. I haven't heard that before.
>
> Hông: Inner-city? Is it like, *heart of the city?*

While I had not known what to expect when I asked the question, I was surprised that these students were not even familiar with the term, inner-city. Once again, though, Adrena proved to be the exception. Not only was she familiar with the term 'inner-city', she had a strong reaction when I showed her the newspaper article, as the following exchange illustrates:

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[65] Rith was from one of the other two schools attending the event.

> Lynne: I want to ask you about this article. Here's the title: "Leveling the playing field, college athletes give inner-city kids tips on sports life." This term here, *inner-city*, what does that mean to you?
>
> Adrena: I think that's really racist the way they said that.
>
> Lynne: Could you explain?
>
> Adrena: Just because of where we live, doesn't describe who we are.
>
> Lynne: Could you say a bit more about that, please?
>
> Adrena: Like, I've lived all over the city, and I don't change each time I'm from somewhere different–like, I'm still the same person. And, I'm sorry, but that one statement totally offends me. So what, we don't live in the best neighbourhood, that doesn't mean that we're of lower class. Yeah, we're probably struggling with financial difficulties, but…I think that is totally uncalled for to brand us, like, disadvantaged kids, and poor families. No, we're not.

Adrena raises several points of interest here–one of them is *class*. Early in the chapter, I contrasted my research to Eckert's (1989, 2000) study of social categories in high school, where class was the primary social variable. I mentioned that my site was just the opposite, with ethnicity variable, but class a constant. This is not to suggest that 'class' was not of concern at Coalfield School; rather, 'class' was not useful as a contrastive feature *within* the community of practice. That this was different than other schools Adrena was familiar with can be seen in the interview excerpt, below. She had been talking about how she felt pressured "to be this or that" at Coalfield School. Was this different in other schools?

> Adrena: The pressure's still the same, but it's not the colour of your skin, or your race as it is here. It's your popularity status. The clothes you have is what's different. It's all materialistic.
>
> Lynne: Okay, that's interesting. And that isn't the issue here?
>
> Adrena: No, it's not. Well, there's the odd time you get a look in the hallway because of what you're wearing, but they don't say anything, unlike in other schools they will.
>
> Lynne: For example?
>
> Adrena: Just, if you're not wearing, like Club Monaco, or something, they won't think you're cool. It's stupid. Or they'll say something about your make-up.[66]

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[66] We will see in the next chapter that Adrena *did* get looks because of what she wore, but brand labels were not the issue.

Class, however, says much about who these students are and will play a role in determining who they will be in the future. Adrena, who had "lived all over the city", found herself in the 'inner-city'.[67] She was learning that "people's access and exposure to, need for, and interest in different communities of practice are related to where they find themselves in the world, as embodied in such things as class, age, ethnicity and gender" (Eckert, 2000, p. 39). Adrena angrily announced that "just because of where we live, doesn't describe who we are." That is what often happens, though. People tend to think/talk about 'inner-city residents' as if that were an adequate description. It seemed ludicrous that inner-city residents could be considered a homogenous group. What did the research participants have in common? The neighbourhood they live in. Even with the small sample of research participants, though, it is clear that their reasons for and experiences of living in that neighbourhood were extremely varied. Moreover, the perceptions and stereotyped expectations that others had of inner-city students did not necessarily match the students' experiences.

For example, Hông, whose response to my question about the term 'inner-city' had been–"Is it like, heart of the city?"–was both surprised and offended by what the article suggested about the inner-city and its inhabitants. Before I had a chance to respond to his question, Hông had read enough of the article to form an opinion:

> I think it's like talking about disadvantaged kids or something like that. Is it trying to say the inner-city place is poor, something like that? I don't know, it's like pretty offending. 'Cause, I mean like people around here, you know, like us people, I wouldn't consider them poor, like, living in poverty or something like that.

Yes, Hông, the article is trying to say the 'inner-city place' is poor. I had had an immediate reaction to Hông's question, "Is it like, *heart* of the city? I was struck by the contrast between the negative undertone implied in the depiction of 'inner-city' in the article and the positive connotations surrounding the word 'heart' (for example, centre, core, spirit, soul). Was this a more appropriate way to describe what the 'inner-city' meant to these students? Clearly, Hông does not think of himself as poor. His remarks corresponded with comments made by the teachers. When I asked Emily about the media portrayal of the day, her response was "If they read that, I don't know what they would think. I don't know if they know that they're disadvantaged, or poor." Similarly, speaking about the Asian students, the principal explained:

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[67] And, while she was still the same person, Adrena was certainly experiencing herself differently at Coalfield School.

> I have been told that what they have here is so much 'better' than what they had, that even those that we would describe as the poorest do not perceive themselves as poor. Some people say that this is why they seem to be unmotivated to 'improve themselves.' This seems rather simplistic to me...It's just that it is so complex![68] (email correspondence)

I agree with Ruth as to the complexity, but that poverty is perceived differently makes perfect sense to me. Not only had these students come from countries with lower standards of living, many came from countries devastated by war. After living in a refugee camp, for example, might not the 'inner-city' seem like the 'heart of the city?' Geographically it is the heart of the city; what difference would it make if we named it that way? *So what* if people have different ideas of what it means to be poor/live in this section of the city? Does it matter? It seemed to me that the answer to this question lay *beyond* the 'inner-city', with others who had ideas of what it meant to live there.

One of the ways that did 'matter' can be found in the labeling power of the term, inner-city. Darren understood this all too well. The following is his response to the article:

> The term inner-city kid, I don't like it. It labels. When you say inner-city kids, people automatically start thinking under-privileged, parents that are alcoholics or doing something wrong. As soon as people hear that I teach downtown, they go, "Oh, you work with inner-city kids." And I just go, "You know what? My kids are the best in the world. I don't have to put up with a lot of stuff that you have to from rich kids." Do we have students who are poor? Yeah. Do we have students who come from rough homes? Yeah, we do. But, I hate that term because it stereotypes the kids. You can tell it gets my fire burning.[69]

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[68] Ruth noted that these comments (as well as the next) comprised pieces from various discussions with other professionals, both inside and outside of the school system, and some from parents themselves.

[69] Darren also acknowledges that "in some instances the term is used to generate funding, so it's one of those catch 22 situations–it allows us to do a lot of things for the kids that we otherwise couldn't to meet their needs."

Yes, I could tell. And I could relate. My experiences teaching Aboriginal students on the reserve had fuelled me with similar feelings. When I told people where I worked, a common response was: "Oh, that must be a tough job. I hear those kids are all behaviour problems. And, their parents don't give a damn." As in Darren's experience, the students I taught were "the best." And, if there was an element of defensiveness in our responses, it came with the territory.

This took me back to Cara and Charles. What had happened? How had they gone from being 'the best' in the community school on the reserve to 'the worst' in junior high? Charles and Cara's Dad thought he knew the answer. He emphatically told me that all the teachers at the school 'in town' were racist. I did not see it so simply. Rather, I would agree with Ryan's (1999) view that while blatant racism does happen, most teachers are genuinely concerned with their students' progress. What is more likely "is that the taken-for-granted beliefs and practices teachers, administrators and policy-makers hold, and which they employ in their efforts to help students learn, work in systematic ways to inadvertently penalize some of these very students" (p. 95). Ryan explains that one of the ways in which this occurs is through stereotypic representations.

Harklau's (2000) article resonated. In an attempt to understand how the students in her study had gone from being 'the good kids to the worst', Harklau drew on the notion of *representation,* which she describes as

> the images, archetypes, or even stereotypes of identity with which students are labeled. I argue that representations result from constant attempts to hold a heterogeneous and ever-evolving social world still long enough to makes sense of it. Whereas identities may be multiple, fragmentary, and subject to constant change, representations are temporary artifacts that serve to stabilize and homogenize images of identities. Because the processes that give rise to representations are largely out of conscious awareness, the tendency is to accept representations such as that of ESOL students as relatively unchanging and self-evident even though…they are in fact locally shaped and continually recreated.[70] (p. 37)

Ryan's (1999) explanation of the way in which stereotypes operate is similar: "In their efforts to cope with a perpetually evolving and changing world educators and students routinely reach for popular and often unfounded images of groups and situations to help them understand, and act in, both familiar and unfamiliar circumstances" (p. 96). Ryan explains that while the concept of a stereotype has a number of different forms, certain elements remain prominent, including "stereotyping as a (1) generic process of categorization, one that (2) works through 'good' and 'bad' images, which in turn (3) frequently misrepresent the groups which they depict" (p. 96).[71] I have offered some examples as to how stereotypes misrepresent the groups which they depict.

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[70] Hall (1991) contends that identity is always a kind of representation.

Stereotypes can also work to limit students' opportunities. For example, Harklau found that the perseverance that was part of the prevailing institutional representation of immigrant students at the high school was simultaneously construed as a lack of innate ability. Once in college, students and teachers found themselves in conflict because of the curriculum's implicit representation of ESOL students as inexperienced users of English–"the lack of recognition given to these students' considerable experience with English language texts led to resistance in college ESOL classes." (p. 57) Because of this mismatch, the students often found themselves cast as deficient; resistance surfaced and escalated. Harklau's explanation aptly describes what happened with Charles and Cara as well[72]. What about the research participants? As can be construed from the section on discourse practices, I think the language challenges these students would face in high school would be of a different nature. I worried about students like Nouy who was 'pretty proud" of the progress she had made in learning English. Her teachers at Coalfield School gave her credit for working hard. Would she be perceived as capable in high school, though?

Issues of stereotyping surfaced in my research, as well; naturally, they manifested themselves in varying ways. One of these ways relates to Ryan's (1999) point that the images associated with media culture play an increasingly important role in shaping who we are:

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[71] For a more detailed discussion of stereotypes, see Ryan (1999), Chapter 5.

[72] As I was finishing the dissertation, I received a letter from a former colleague at the band-run school mentioned in this chapter. She sent me a newspaper clipping with a graduation picture of Cara, who had recently graduated from with a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies with distinction from Malaspina College. The following message accompanied the photo: "Congratulations. The family is so proud of you."

> The systems of representation and production of images and associated discourses, perhaps in ways at least as powerful as our interactions with others, offer positions for us to occupy. Moreover, these images and the discourses that work through them have taken centre stage in our contemporary world. (p. 148)

Hông had experienced these systems of representation at work. He told me that he felt "embarrassed" by the way Asian people were represented in the media:

> Well, people may not like certain people, like Vietnamese, 'cause, like, we often see news about Asian people, gangs and drugs and stuff and that gives us like a bad image.

Because of this characteristic representation, Hông was often reluctant to speak his first language, Vietnamese, in public, lest he call attention to himself. This was in opposition to Hông's family language practices; the use of Vietnamese in the home was strongly encouraged as integral to cultural identity. At the same time, Hông (who had expressed an interest in acting) lamented that there were not more Asian actors, especially Asian actors other than the 'expected':

> I'm not trying to sound racist or something, but like you don't see too many Asians, like in the movies or something. Except someone like Jackie Chan.

As in several other aspects of the research, study findings regarding stereotypes emphasised the distinctive nature of the research site. In this case, many of the stereotypes did not fit.

Thankfully, the one to which Hông refers (gangs and drugs) was one that did not match, although there had been problems in the neighbourhood. With exceptions, neither did the stereotype of the high achieving Asian student correspond. That many of these Asian students were refugees who lived in the inner-city and attended Coalfield School rather than one of the schools in more affluent areas of the city helped to explain this particular mismatch. Transience, so often associated with inner-city students, was not a problem for the majority of the students. As described earlier, the Asian students (the 'oldtimers') represented a stable population. For the Aboriginal and White students, though (once again, with exceptions), transience was an issue. This was not structurally happenstance. Why was the neighbourhood maintaining the Asian population, but not the White and Aboriginal residents? I posed this question to the principal, who explained the phenomenon accordingly:

> Some characterize the difference between Asian, Aboriginal and White groups as the 'inner-city' being where the Asians have started from, often on their way to a 'better' community, but for the Native and White, where they have ended up. For those groups it is seen as an undesirable place to be. (Ruth Patnorev, in email correspondence, June 2000)

I wondered if Ruth's account provided a partial explanation to Adrena's strong reaction to the article. For the Aboriginal students, regular attendance was also a concern. They comprised approximately15% of the school population, and over the course of the year four Aboriginal students were registered in the Grade 9 class. However, two had already left school by the time I began the project, and the other two attended so irregularly that I was unable to collect consistent data. That my study was with the oldest students in the school complicated matters in this regard. Given my particular interest in (as well as the concern regarding) Aboriginal education, I was disappointed in that I was not able to study these dynamics. Ruth's comment emphasises the point that it does not make sense to talk about inner-city residents as though they share the same characteristics. Neither were the Asians a homogenous group; rather, within the Asian population were different ethnic groups, with different histories. We have seen that many of the Asian residents in this study were *not* on their way to a 'better' community. The Cambodian families, in particular, had been living in the neighborhood for many years–it was home, and Coalfield was their community school. Ruth's comments below refer specifically to the families of the Cambodian students.

> Living conditions in the Coalfield community are certainly a great step up from the conditions from which they came. As well, for many of them, education has not been seen as particularly important. Many of our parents are under or unemployed, in low skilled, minimum wage and/or part time employment. Many have found learning English very difficult. And so for a variety of reasons, are not 'upwardly mobile'. This is not true for many of the other Asian groups that came. So the motivation to move out of the area is not there. (Ruth Patnorev, email correspondence, June 2000)

For the Asians who stayed, was the inner-city a desirable place to be? Was it, the *heart of the city?* Sarun, for example, was born in Thailand. His parents had left Cambodia for Thailand" to get away from the war." Sarun explained:

> After two years in Bangkok, I moved to Canada with my parents to start a new life. They wanted to make it easier for me to grow up. They sacrificed a lot just for me to come here and make my life easier. My mom is a janitor and my dad works in a restaurant.

In addition to an older sister who was born in Cambodia, Sarun has three younger siblings who were born in Canada. By Canadian standards, Sarun's family was considered 'poor.' A sports lover, Sarun could have benefited from Sportall–he had played hockey for half a season, but his parents told him he had to drop out because it was too expensive. By Cambodian standards? Well, that is another story. Although Sarun had never been to Cambodia, his parents had been the previous year to visit relatives. He told me that they were very poor. I wondered what *that* poor looked like.

Kim was born in Canada. Her parents left Vietnam "because of the war. They had to go to Hong Kong first to be able to come to Canada. The process took a really long time. My mom was pregnant with me when they came to Canada." Kim's older brother was born in Hong Kong and she has a younger brother who was born in Canada. Her father works in a framing factory and her mother is taking an English course. When Kim was in Grade 5, she traveled to Vietnam for the first time; her family spent two months there visiting relatives. She explained:

> I don't really want to go back. It was hard to see so many people living that way. My relatives are better off than others because we send them money, but people don't live like we do here.

By Vietnamese standards, Kim's family had a lot. Like Hông, Kim had not appreciated the newspaper representation of 'inner-city' student: "Is that what they're saying? That we don't have the money to buy equipment? Well, not for all of us. That's not good." Returning to Emily's comment: "I don't know if they know that they're disadvantaged, or poor." One wonders not only if they *know*, but also if they *are*. What does 'upwardly mobile' look like to these families? And yet, despite the similarities, these two students are positioned differently. We have seen already that perhaps Kim has more 'motivation' than does Sarun–perhaps not to move out of the area, but to 'improve herself.'

So, *so what* if Rith, for example, goes to an "inner-city" school, where many students are not considered to be university bound? So what, indeed? The implication is that coming from the inner-city need not limit his opportunities, (especially with the playing field being leveled). No, Rith can be anything he wants–a doctor even. "The camp is another way for Sportall to *level the playing field,*" said Wayne Sanderson, provincial director of the non-profit society. "We just want to make sure everyone has the same opportunities." Do such programs really level the playing field? This made me think of Brian Johnson's (2003) description of the Cannes film festival in Maclean's magazine: "And what makes this place unique is that it presents the illusion of a level playing field...In the real world, of course, there's no contest; Hollywood rules" (p. 53). In a way that is what the representation of this event did–it offered the illusion of a level playing field for these students.[73] And, that allowed people to feel good, if only temporarily. A case in point can be seen with Nouy's response to the article: "Well, raising money for the poor families. Like, I heard the coaches talking about that, so it feels pretty great when you're helping someone, like the poor people, that can't afford to participate in sports, especially the little kids."

Norton (2000) uses the term identity "to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). How did the students understand their possibilities for the future? Did their understandings correspond with the ways in which others are considering their future prospects? With high school approaching, the research participants were at a crossroads, making important decisions as to their education. How would being 'inner-city kids' influence their 'life chances?' In this regard, Darren was concerned as to what effect the article could have on his students:

> As a young student reading that, what we're doing from the beginning is working away at their confidence. It says to them: "Well, you go to an inner-city school, so you can't go to university." I think it's a crime that we do this to the students. And, students sometimes will try and use it as an excuse, and say–"So what? I don't care."–and not do work, or not be here.

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[73] My intention here is not to criticize the organization–I wish that Sarun could have kept up with his hockey. Rather, it is the representation of 'inner-city' student that I consider problematic.

Darren's response is interesting in the sense that what the article proposes is that Rith *can* go to university, even if he is from the inner-city. Why does Darren read this otherwise? Barry, who taught math to the Grade 9s, and had attended the event with the students, picked up on the intended message.

> I remember feeling funny as the guy explained about university as if he expected them to go to university, and I remember thinking, and even sort of day dreaming about interrupting and saying, "Wait a minute, most of these kids are not going to go to university, and we need to just be realistic about this." I mean, what, fewer than 10% of children go to university, on the average, and from this school I expect it will be less. That's just a fact of life. If your parents didn't go to university, your chances of going to university are not as good, and if you're an immigrant, chances are your parents didn't go to university. I mean, there are other issues, but that's pretty simple.

Well, it may be a fact of life, but I certainly did not find it at all simple. And, of course, not all immigrants are alike. Over the course of the year, Emily had shared similar sentiments, though. One example can be found in relation to career day, an event for students in Grades 5-9. Speakers came in to talk about different careers; occupations represented included cosmetologist, plumber, truck driver, photographer, masseuse, soldier, police, computer technician, tiler, geologist, nurse, mechanic, paralegal. Students signed up for the sessions they wanted to attend, with Grade 9s having first choice. As I was unable to attend, I asked Emily about the event. She told me that some of the students were "not realistic" in their choices; in several cases, the sessions that were least popular were the jobs the students would be most likely to have (for example, truck driver, plumber, tiler). Another instance had occurred early in the research project. Emily made a comment that, at the time, I found offensive. We had been talking about the students' English language proficiency (see discourse practices). Her view was that while the children of the student participants would "be okay as they would learn English at an earlier age, but these kids are probably doomed to lives as janitors, when, in their own country, they could be brilliant." Talk about the price of 'entering the game late'! I found my thoughts returning to the conversation in discourse practices–maybe Emily was playing a role in 'protecting the cultural capital of the dominant society' after all! The contrasting identities suggested/proposed/offered in Emily's comment also struck me as the ultimate depiction of *socially situated identity*, of *identity in movement*. The following journal entry provides a glimpse as to my thinking:

Journal reflection, June 4, 2000

I often thought about the research participants, in particular the Cambodian students–how their ethnic heritage was such an integral aspect of their identity, yet none had even been born in Cambodia. Some had never even visited their county of origin. Their personal memories would have been limited (or nonexistent). Those experiences were not the focus of my research, though. So I could only imagine what had brought their families to Canada. And, imagine I did. As I began to interview the students, such thoughts increased. I began reading more: "The Clay Marble," a children's novel about a Cambodian girl in a refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodia border; "First they Killed my Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers;" "Children of Cambodian's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors." The introduction to this last book is called "A World Turned Upside Down"[74] *Kiernan (1997) notes that: ""Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields" provides a child's-eye view of a different, harsher world, one in which Cambodia's children were turned upside down. From 1975 to 1979 the Khmer Rouge regime not only upended the entire Buddhist religion but also mounted history's fiercest ever attack on family life" (p. xi). The book is an account of memoirs by survivors. Given the age of the students in my research project, I have estimated that their parents would likely be of approximate age to those who wrote the memoirs. Or of the characters in the "Clay Marble"–fictionalized, but, at the same time, too true. I cannot even begin to explain the many thoughts and images in my head: war, the Khmer Rouge, family, refugees, death, looking for a 'better life', despair, hope. Sitting at the back of the class observing the students, I would wonder what lives these adolescents and their families (and so many others whose lives have been disrupted by war) might be living had the political struggles in Cambodia (and Vietnam) been otherwise. What a strange twist of fate that had led these particular students to be sitting in a classroom in this Canadian city–talk about socially situated identity, about identity in movement...*

Although I found myself positioned more closely to Darren in the discussion (above), I had some learning to do myself. I still had some concerns about Emily's comments; however, they emphasised not only the complexity of the issue, but the ways in which my perspective had been limited as well. One hopes that some of the student participants would be university bound. And, if they were not, well, *so what?* Dith was one of the students who exposed this particular crack in my thinking. During his interview, we were discussing his future plans. Dith was planning on enrolling in RAP,[75] so that he could apprentice for a trade–for example, mechanics or plumbing.

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[74] Kiernan (1997) explains that the reference is from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations.*

> If I go through that route I'll have a better chance of finishing school and getting a good job. At career day, a mechanic was talking about the RAP program. And, Mr. Williams told me about it, too. He wanted me to join the program because I'm always one of the students that can't learn quickly, you know, like take stuff fast. I could sit there a long time and study it.

We will see, however, that if he was learning with his hands, Dith was anything but slow.

At one point, I asked Dith what his parents thought of his plans.[76]

> Dith: My parents? They're happy as long as I, uh, finish high school and get a good job that I could live on for the rest of my life. Then they wouldn't have to worry about me, my lack of money, stuff like that.
>
> Lynne: What is their idea of what a good job for you would be?
>
> Dith: Enough to afford a house for all of us. (little laugh)
>
> Lynne: Including them?
>
> Dith: Yup
>
> Lynne: And, what's *your* idea of what a good job would be?
>
> Dith: I want to be a computer technician, but my math skills aren't as good as they should be.

Dith's comments brought to mind Valdés's (1996) book, *Con Respeto,* a study of Mexican immigrant families in border communities in the United States. I had been struck by a particular passage in the book that highlights the difference in orientation and perspective between the mothers in the study and the researcher. During a conversation with one of the mothers, Valdés mentions that her son, a graduate student at a good university, had been visiting. The conversation continues as follows:

> Rosario: Say, Lupe, and how old is your son?
> GV: He's 24.
> Rosario: And he doesn't work?

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[75] The Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) allows full-time high school students to start training in a trade as early as Grade 10.

[76] Dith's father is a cleaner at Boston Pizza, and his mother is at school learning English.

> GV: Well, no, that is, yes. Well, the thing is that he's studying and his job is to study. When he finishes he's going to get a very good job and what he's got to do now is to dedicate himself to his studies.
>
> Rosario: And he doesn't send you money?
>
> GV: No, but I don't send him money either because he has a very good scholarship and they pay for everything.
>
> Rosario: Oh, I see.
>
> GV: He's a very good son. We miss him a lot.
>
> Rosario: You know Miguel (then 17) is a very good boy, too. He always asks us for permission to go places, not like other boys his age. And as a matter of fact, he works already and helps me out already. Every summer he goes to Dallas to work with his uncle in construction. And when he comes back, he gives me his check. "Here, mother," he says, "this is for you." (pp. 184-185)

Valdés goes on to explain that, although nothing more was said, she knew that Rosario felt a little sorry for her–that a 24-year-old man was still in school and not working was difficult for her to understand. A good job for Rosario was one in which one did not work too hard and in which one made a decent living. Of the women in the study, Valdés notes: "Mothers did not achieve particular status among their friends and acquaintances because their children had important jobs in far away cities, or because they had gotten numerous awards for their athletic ability or their academic distinction… What mothers did boast about…was that their grown children looked after them, that these children had chosen to live close by, and they, as mothers, were provided for and sought after" (p. 182).[77]

Although the scope of my study did not allow me the opportunity to interview parents, some parallels can be drawn between Valdés's study and some of my research participants, as can be seen by the exchange with Dith, above. I thought back to my puzzlement as to the ways in which the boys approached their schoolwork in the section on gender. I recalled Darren's explanation that, unlike the girls, the boys did not see education as a 'door opener' because of cultural views that placed men as 'heads of the family.' In this regard, Emily pointed out what she considered to be a contradiction in the boy's thinking:

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[77] For a fascinating discussion of familism, see Valdés (1996, pp. 185-188).

> If you look at it, those girls are going to get some good jobs. Those guys are not going to have any job, or some menial labour job because their marks aren't going to get them into post secondary, whereas the girls' marks are. And, the guys don't see that. They think that they can sit around and do nothing, while the girls do all the work. Yet, when they talk about their family life, the man should be out working, and the women should be at home taking care of the kids. So, I'm saying, "How are you going to do that when you don't have a good education?" You know, they have it all backwards.

The above comment had been made in relation to the language profile of the ESL students, but it seemed clear to me that Emily's "doomed to live as janitors" prediction was directed towards the boys in the class (in particular, the Cambodian boys). As with the Mexican immigrants Valdés worked with, the parents of the student participants had not had jobs in Cambodia that would have required post-secondary education. But, as Valdés learned, there are other ways to look at what constitutes a 'good job.' This way of viewing the situation could be applied to my research as well. Contrast Emily's "menial labour job" with Dith's "good job that I could live on for the rest of my life." One has a definite negative connotation, whereas the other sounds as though it *could* be a 'good thing.' Is it possible that we could be talking about the *same* job?[78] I think the answer is yes–depending on how one is positioned, of course. While I would not necessarily agree (completely) with Darren's comment that "you can't defeat what your parents have taught you", given data presented he raises a pertinent point.

And, once again, what about 'the girls?' Why were *they* able to see education as 'a chance to open doors'? Darren's response:

> Some of it is maturity, some of it background–parents want the girls to do well. I think a lot of it comes from moms who came here without an education, and they really want their daughters to get an education, to beat the cycle.

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[78] A case in point could be the janitor's position within the local school district which provides workers with a unionized workforce with good security and good salary as well as the place of the janitor in many schools (for example, the one person who some children can talk to). One wonders how it feels to be a school janitor if teachers use this reference as an example of students making 'poor choices.'

Clearly, this topic is an extremely complex one, with many layers to understand, as can be seen in the following interview exchange with Kim. We were talking about career day.

> Lynne: Which sessions did you attend?
>
> Kim: I went to make-up artist, geology and nursing. I want to be a nurse when I grow up, so I took that. And then my parents are telling me, my mom mostly, that that's not a good job. It's way too much hard work.
>
> Lynne: What would your mother prefer you to do?
>
> Kim: I guess office work.
>
> Lynne: Any ideas as to why?
>
> Kim: Well, I plan to go to university, but my mom she says, "Why do you want to go to university? Just get a job." But, if I want to be a nurse, I have to go to university, right?
>
> Lynne: What about your dad?
>
> Kim: My dad, he doesn't really get involved with this kind of stuff. My mom, she wanted me to go to Eritsland School because it was closer but the school system is not good 'cause they just give you the work and you just work on it.

This exchange, too, reminded me of *Con Respeto.* I tried to support Kim in her plans to be a nurse and, at the same time, be mindful of the cultural expectations. How to encourage her *with respect*? Emily and I discussed this. She had talked to Kim about this at length and had

> really tried to encourage her to follow her dreams. It will be hard with the cultural expectations to please her parents, but perhaps she will work for a couple years and then be strong enough to go ahead with her plans. I hope she will be able to go to university first, though. It's ironic–so many parents are determined their kids will go to university and the kids don't want to, and here is a kid who knows what she wants, works hard, and has the ability.[79]

In the section on gender, I promised to return to the article that claimed that girls today have "a clear sense of entitlement and yet the most spectacular array of possibilities yet assembled, including role models who have made it past the tokenism gate" (Timson, 2001, p. 48). I think Kim's story makes it clear that this sweeping statement does not necessarily apply to *all* girls. Timson went on to discuss the opportunities, in particular, of her daughter and friends, who were fourteen, the same age as the girls in my study.

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[79] Kim was the top student in the class. Interesting, she and Hông were cousins.

For my research participants, though, the array of possibilities did not appear to be quite as spectacular. However, there is another way to look at this, too–compared to Kim's mother, her opportunities did look pretty good. It depends on how one is positioned–as the daughter of 'well-educated upper middle class professionals' or as the daughter of 'uneducated, underemployed refugees'. Like Hubbard (1999), I was learning "the benefit of examining the interrelatedness of ethnicity, class, and gender when attempting to understand the ways in which academic success is constructed" (p. 363).

A related strand in this tangled mixture is that of parental support. Valdés (1996) makes the point that closely related to the research on differences between mainstream and minority children is research on parents and their ability to 'support' their children's education. The research suggests that non-mainstream parents either do not have the 'right' attitudes toward the value of education, do not prepare their children well for school, or are not sufficiently involved in their children's education (Valdés, 1996). Emily had on occasion noted that many of the students did not have much support at home–to work hard or to pursue their education. Speaking of the participants in her study, Valdés notes that "very few of the families had any concept of 'involvement' in their children's education as defined by schools" (p. 160).

> Each day they struggled to survive in a new context that was very different from the world they had known, but it did not occur to them that values involving, for example, the way in which children were raised would need to be questioned ...None of the families ever imagined that choices would need to be made between, for example, young people's responsibilities to their family and their own ambitions...The problem was that none of them were familiar with notions and views of success and achievement in American terms. (pp. 172-173)

Did this apply to the parents of the research participants? Data show that they struggled in similar ways and faced similar conflicts. Darren suggests another reason for their reluctance to become involved.

> It's a passive support. But, whenever we really need something, or need to talk to them, overall it's been good. The involvement is extremely low as far as active involvement, which would be a nice thing. They don't often question what we're doing, coming from a country where people who question disappear. And, so they're brought up not to question. We've been brought up within a background where questioning is a constant–we constantly question what somebody's doing.

While teachers may not appreciate parents who question what they are doing, it is an expected part of parents' involvement in schools. Like the parents Valdés worked with, these parents "could well be called *unsupportive by mainstream standards*" (p. 173).

Which takes us back to Eckert's (2000) point that "the kinds of situations that people find themselves in, their needs, the kinds of responses they tend to have to these situations and needs, and the kinds of people and resources available to engage in theses responses with, will vary depending on where they live in society" (p. 39). These students and their families lived in the *inner-city*. I return also to the newspaper article that introduced this piece. In terms of 'leveling the playing field,' Valdés offers a rather sobering outlook for the participants in her study:

> The truth is that I do not believe that tampering with what happens inside the "Black box" of the school or the classroom can, *by itself*, change the impact of the other factors contributing to school failure.[80] I doubt that well-meaning practitioners, researchers, and policymakers can really ***level the playing field*** even if they could change teachers, change schools, and teach Mexican-origin families to become as focused on and as dedicated to their children's school success as middle-class parents already are….Affluence does indeed make a great deal of difference in school. (p. 204)

I am not prepared (at this point) to make the same statement for my research participants; after all, mine was a different study with different participants. I will revisit this issue in the final chapter. I do, however, agree with Valdés that affluence does make a difference. Naturally, it is more complex than privileged circumstances. I began this part of identity practices–assisted by the newspapers' representation and Freed's application of communities of practice–by examining what these students had in common. They were all inner city students. Along the way, I have shown that within the inner city school, it makes a difference whether one is White, Aboriginal or Asian (and within that, Cambodian, Vietnamese or Chinese), a refugee or an immigrant, a girl or boy. Needless to say, though, for these inner city students 'leveling the playing field' would take a lot more than a sports camp at the university. No, for these kids, the playing field was fairly steep. Thankfully, some of them appeared to be adept at managing slopes.[81]

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[80] Valdés (1996) notes that the trend in the investigation of the ways in which schools reproduce class membership is "an attempt to understand the contents of the 'black box,' that is, to understand what actually goes on in educational institutions in order to bring about 'failure' for certain groups of individuals" (p. 19).

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[81] On this note, shortly before the research project ended, the local school district posted the honour roll standings for students in the district. Three students from the Grade 9 class at Coalfield School made the honour roll–Kim. Nouy, and Hông –the three Vietnamese.

CHAPTER 5
LET THE LIGHT SHINE IN: DISRUPTING COMMUNITY PRACTICES

> Social meaning and identity have to do with people's forms of engagement in communities of practice and in the world at large. It has to do with engagement in the day-to-day social practice that makes communities what they are and that articulates those communities with others and ultimately in what we call society. The individual's identity is carved through his or her forms of participation in the group, and the group's identity is carved through the interplay of the individual forms of participation that constitute its life. And both individual and group identities are in continual construction, continual change, continual refinement. (Eckert, 2000, pp. 42-43)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described some of the community practices in the Grade 9 language arts class, in particular, social, discourse and identity practices. Students in the C of P were portrayed as "incredibly close-knit", but also likely to form divisions along race and gender lines. Most were reluctant to engage in oral discourse patterns typically expected in school. While I presented these practices as well-established–in some cases, seemingly entrenched–naturally, they were not static. Lave and Wenger (1991) make the point that "since activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive, change is a fundamental property of communities of practice and their activities" (p. 117). One way in which change occurred in the C of P under study was through the disruption of community practices. The disruption of classroom practices in turn shed further light on the way in which the C of P operated by making the expected more visible. In this chapter, then, I bring to light what happened when community practices were disrupted–through group work, by newcomers, and by means of an event which turned learning "inside out and upside down" yet ended up "the right way round." In doing so, I was directed towards new literature. Bakhtin, in particular, illuminated my thinking in particular sections of this chapter. As Gee (1996) suggests, Bakhtin's work "is a light leading in the proper direction" (p. 280).

'The Groupwork Experiments' (Organizing Instructional Discourse)

> What counts is how teachers organize instruction…The roles we establish as teachers and the interactions we undertake with our students, through our questions, responses, and assignments, inexorably set out the possibilities for meaning in our classes and, in this way, the context of learning. This is a fact of social organization...Whatever we say and think in these roles is shaped significantly by the social organization of the discourse and the respective roles of the conversants. (Nystrand, 1997, p. 9)

The description of discourse practices that I provided in Chapter 4 depicted discourse practices in the Grade 9 language arts classroom as well-established and, to some extent, restricted. Most classes followed a regular pattern, in which Emily gave brief instructions as to the assignment for the day, asked if there were any questions, told the students to begin work, and provided directions and reminders during the period. I mentioned, however, that this represented an incomplete picture of discourse practices in the C of P. Although this pattern of student-teacher interaction continued, more or less, over the course of the year, the ways in which instructional discourse was organized varied. In this section I provide a more thorough examination of classroom discourse, primarily through a discussion of groupwork.

After the Christmas break, Emily and I met to discuss the project to date. I wanted to find out how she was feeling about my presence in the classroom. In addition, having planned to research student-student and teacher-student interaction, I was concerned about the data I was collecting. During the first term, students had generally been engaged in individual seatwork. I was relieved when Emily broached this topic herself, suggesting that she have the students begin groupwork so that I would be able to see more in the way of peer interaction. Needless to say, I was eager to see what would transpire. The groupwork that I describe here took place primarily in the context of a unit on racism, which began in mid-January and concluded with the assembly in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in March. Over the course of the unit, students completed various activities and assignments: charts comparing racism in the 60s and the 90s after watching the movies *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Mississippi Burning*; a small-group discussion which asked students to draw connections between the movies and their personal lives; an examination of stereotypes; a group research project which included presentations and was followed up by individual essays on racism. I came to think of the groupwork as a disruption of community practices. This section, then, will explore what happened when established classroom practices were disrupted by groupwork.

If Nystrand is correct in that "what counts is how teachers organize instruction," the literature was not promising. For example, Cazden's (1988) review of the research on classroom discourse at the elementary level showed two main types of organization: large group instruction and individual instruction. At the secondary level, Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) conducted a large empirical study to examine the general effects of dialogic practices on achievement and learning. The purpose of their research was to investigate the effects of instructional organization on student learning, contrasting the epistemologies of recitation and discussion. They observed hundreds of eighth- and ninth-grade English lessons over a period of two years. Study results found that while students generally learn more in classrooms organized dialogically, classroom discourse was overwhelming monologic,[1] as can be seen in the overall study synopsis:

> When teachers were not lecturing, students mainly were either answering questions or completing seatwork. The teacher asked nearly all the questions, few questions were authentic, and few teachers followed up student responses. On average, discussion lasted less than 50 seconds per class in eighth grade and less then 15 seconds per class in ninth grade. Small-groupwork in eighth grade took only about half a minute each day, and only a little more than 2 minutes a day in grade 9. (p. 33)

When I read these results, my first thought was that Emily's class looked pretty good in comparison. My second thought was that, if the authors were contrasting the epistemologies of recitation and discussion, then I needed to better inform myself as to the difference.[2] I defined recitation (or IRE) in my literature review as well as in previous chapter. By comparison, Nystrand describes classrooms in which the talk is more like discussion or conversation than recitation: "In these classrooms, the teacher validates particular students' ideas by incorporating their responses into subsequent questions…In the give-and-take of such talk, students' responses and not just teacher questions shape the course of talk. The discourse in these classrooms is therefore less predictable and repeatable because it is "negotiated" and jointly determined" (p. 6).

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[1] A monologic approach assumes that a single perspective is adequate for 'telling the truth.'

[2] Nystrand (1997) makes the point that instruction often falls somewhere between the two extremes of recitation and discussion.

Nystrand draws on the work of Bakhtin to explain how verbal interactions shape the understandings and thinking of the conversants. Bakhtin explains that "monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented people" (1984, p. 293). In contrast, a dialogic perspective on discourse and learning starts with the premise "that discourse is essentially structured by the interaction of the conversants, with each playing a particular social role" (Nystrand, 1997, p. 8). Instructional discourse is shaped by the extent of reciprocity between teachers and students. Bakhtin's account of discourse stresses interaction and the role of conflict, focusing on the dynamic processes whereby meanings unfold in the interaction of two or more conversants. Nystrand makes the point that since learning is significantly shaped by learners' interactions, plus the responses they anticipate from teachers, peers, and texts, a key issue concerns the "dialogic potential of different kinds of instructional discourse for learning" (p. 11). He asks whether all instruction is equally dialogic. By way of illustration, he compares recitation to dialogue. In the former, the teacher's voice is so dominant that such instruction seems arguably more 'monologic' than dialogic, while the latter is defined by the character of its tightly woven interlaced comments and responses.[3] Nystrand acknowledges that while classroom discourse can never be truly monologic, it can be organized as if it were. For example, teachers strive for monologism, when they "prescript" the questions they ask, the answers they accept, and the order in which they ask the questions. This description matches well the exchange I described earlier in which Emily and the students were going over the answers to Chapter 1 of *The Pearl.* Nystrand summarizes his discussion of recitation versus discussion accordingly:

> Ultimately the effectiveness of instructional discourse is a matter of the quality of teacher-student interactions and the extent to which students are

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[3] At the same time, he questions whether we can validly claim that some instruction is more dialogic than others, adding "isn't the fundamental premise of dialogism that *all* language is dialogic, even discourse we might be inclined to call monologic?" (p. 11).

> assigned challenging and serious epistemic roles requiring them to think, interpret, and generate new understandings. (p. 7)

I wondered about this. As shown, the quality of teacher-student interactions in the Grade 9 class fell short in significant ways. However, a community of practice framework requires one to look at more than teacher-student interaction. What about student-student interaction? I could explore whether the students were being provided with "challenging and serious epistemic roles" through groupwork.

The Discussion 'Evidence'

The group-work began with the kind of class I had long awaited–one that certainly proved to be a disruption of community discourse practices. In the 'like pulling teeth' section, I noted what I considered to be a lack of discussion. Although there may have been others, over the course of my research, I observed one notable exception. The discussion happened during the first assignment (which took place over two periods and followed the watching of the movies *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Mississippi Burning).* During the first class, (working in groups) the students made charts comparing racism in the 60s and the 90s. During the second class, the charts were shared with the whole class, and then used as a springboard for a more general discussion on racism. Given my preoccupation with class discussions, the reader will not be surprised that I was particularly interested in the discussion. My fieldnotes for the day say: "YES!! Finally! This was really the first time I have seen what could be considered a discussion in the class." (Fieldnotes, January 20th, 2000)

For the purpose of the point I want to make here, I will focus on the discussion component of the assignment. Emily put the students' charts up on the board and went through these chart by chart, highlighting certain points and asking students questions. With the charts as a base, the discussion moved along reasonably well. Emily was trying to get the students to think critically, to move beyond simplistic comparisons. For example, one chart included the point that cars are different now. Another had the claim that we no longer have discrimination. Emily disagreed, and told the students to pay attention when they watched TV on the weekend to see how black people were depicted. Adrena made the point that we do not have slaves anymore, to which Emily, reflecting perhaps a particular class position, suggested that 'we' do have maids. Once the information on the charts had been covered, Emily attempted to take the discussion to a more personal level. The films had been American, and had focused exclusively on Black/White relations. Emily wanted to bring the discussion closer to home. She approached this through the question, "Have any of you ever experienced racism?" There was a subtle shift in the tone of the class. I noted some whispering/mumbling, but no one volunteered an answer. After a short silence, Adrena offered a comment: "Racism is no longer tolerated." Emily asked her to elaborate. Adrena explained that schools have programs now to deal with racism. Not satisfied, Emily posed a scenario: "Justin comes from a racist family. In his family, Darith has been taught to tolerate racist behaviour. Would a workshop help?" Adrena thought it would. Carline disagreed. When Emily prodded her to explain, the response was silence. She said to Carline, "Don't be shy." More silence. She probed. More silence.

Emily told them that her opinion was that it would take a life-changing experience to change, and began to relate her personal experiences with racism. She said that while she is not racist, her family is, and then launched into a story of how, when she dated a black man, he was not allowed in her family home. She also described some of the instances of racism she had observed as well as the protests that took place when she was attending university in the US. Emily made a couple more attempts to engage the students in the discussion. As the boys had not participated in this part of the discussion at all, she asked them what their parents would say if they brought home a white girl. No takers. However, Carline responded to Emily's question: "My mother is open-minded and would not mind if I brought home a date who was not white." Emily also tried to open the floor with the suggestion that it is not *only* white people who are racist, but that the reverse may be tolerated more (for example, Black towards White).

This class played a significant role in my learning, albeit in retrospect. At the time, my initial excitement that the class was actually having a discussion (and on a topic so potentially stimulating as racism) gradually gave way to disappointment as the conversation petered out. In relation to the 'like pulling teeth mystery', I later considered this to be key 'evidence' that getting these students to engage in discussions was (at least somewhat) 'like pulling teeth.' At the time, I found myself trying to analyze Emily's discussion techniques. While acknowledging that the students had not been very forthcoming, I wondered what other approaches might have been more productive in drawing the students into the conversation. Looking back, I see that the only students whom Emily managed to draw into the conversation were the two white girls. Now that I have been further 'enlightened' by the literature, my reading of this event is different in other ways as well. In the example provided here, Emily's intention was clearly to engage the students in what Nystrand classifies as 'discussion' (as opposed to recitation). Although different questioning strategies might have improved matters, it is fair to say that the nature of the students played a role in the way the discussion turned out to be relatively unsuccessful. Emily was asking students "authentic" questions, questions without "prespecified" answers, asked to get information, rather than to see what students know and do not know. The type of discussion Emily was trying to draw the students into suggested that she valued the importance of students' contributions to learning and instruction.[4]

In their study of adolescents' classroom talk, Phelps and Weaver (1999) draw on Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* to explain how choice of voice is always influenced and interpreted within a social context. The authors consider how public and personal voices of students either intersected or remained distinct, and the possible influences of school, culture, gender, or social factors on student participation in classroom discussion. For students to successfully contribute their voices to the public dialogue of the classroom, or in Bakhtin's terms, "to become an active participant in social dialogue," they must be able to negotiate the intricate and often discordant discourses of peers, teachers, school policies, and curricula. For the purposes of their article (and to meet Bakhtin's definition of an utterance) the authors use the terms *public voice* and *personal voice* to describe the range of observable student verbalization in school settings: "Individual students have personal voices which they use to express their thoughts and feelings to friends, family and teachers, whereas public voices are the contributions students make to the public discourse of the classroom and school" (p. 323).[5]

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[4] Tharp and Gillmore (1988) call these types of discussions "instructional conversations" and Newmann (1990) terms them "substantive conversations."

Phelps and Weaver recognize that there are many factors that may inhibit the exercise of students' public voices in school, including "personality, social dynamics, participation structures, teacher style, gender, culture and achievement level" (p. 327). Judging by what we learned in the section on discourse practices, any number of these factors could help to explain why students in my study did not readily add their personal voices to the public discourse. And, while Emily met silence when she tried to persuade the students to contribute their personal experiences in the public discourse on racism, I learned that students did have something to say on the topic.

For example, during my interview with Kim, she mentioned the question that Emily had asked students–would your parents have a problem if you brought home a date who was from a different cultural background? She told me that, while she thought this would not be a problem, she later learned otherwise. In Kim's case, the boy in question was Cambodian, and the problem had its basis in political tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia.[6] Kim spoke of this as a new insight she developed from an interaction with her family, an interaction that happened after the class in question; this shows that Kim, while silent in class, was learning.

Another example can be found with Hông, who offered neither comment nor opinion in the class discussion on racism. During our interview, we were talking about the essay Hông had written on racism: "It was ok, 'cause I got to, like, express my feelings towards racism and like its negative side." We talked a bit about the movies they had watched in class. I then posed the same question that Emily had asked in class: "Have you experienced racism? Hông did have something to say, and it involved his friend and classmate, Darith. Before he would proceed, he wanted to ensure that Darith was not going to get in trouble.[7]

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[5] Phelps and Weaver (1999) note that the distinction between public and personal voices is often blurred in classrooms–students, like others, are polyvocal.

[6] Kim was very upset and talked at length about her dilemma; she asked, however, that I keep the details private.

[7] In retrospect, I realized I should not necessarily have given Hông my assurance.

> Okay, he said maybe we should like get all the Viets out or something like that–like, let's bring a gun in church or something.[8] I was pretty angry, and then he told me he was joking. I understand that he was joking around, but I was upset. I know Darith just likes to talk a lot, he makes fun a lot.

Although we had had very little time to talk after the class discussion on racism, Emily had made two interesting comments. The anecdotes provided by Kim and Hông reminded me of the first: "We know they have experienced racism, though they are not talking." It is easy to see why both students would be reluctant to share these experiences with the class at large. It is reasonable to assume that other students had something to say as well. What type of setting would enable them to add their voices to the public discourse?

The second comment that Emily made was that when the students did not respond to her questions during the discussion, she ended up "talking too much." In this regard as well, Phelps and Weaver's study informs mine. The authors contrast two competing theories (similar to what Gee calls discourses) that influence classroom talk: 1) knowledge is understood to be created by authorities and the teacher's voice dominates, and 2) knowledge is socially situated and students' personal voices are welcomed in the public arena.[9] Emily more closely fits the second–she welcomed students' voices. Nevertheless, in the example provided here, the teacher's voice certainly dominated the discussion:

> Whether students' personal voices are encouraged and allowed to join the public discourse of the classroom depends in part on what teachers and students believe about knowledge and learning. As convener, facilitator, and model, the teacher especially is in a position to either dominate and control classroom talk or to moderate adolescent voices and help students apply the ethics of talk to classroom dialogue.[10] (Phelps & Weaver, 1999, p. 328)

Once again (as with the teacher-centered versus student-centered comparison), what was going on in the Grade 9 C of P did not match the literature well. Phelps and

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[8] Hông explained that Viets was short for Vietnamese.

[9] See Johnston and Nicholls (1995) for more information on these "competing theories."

[10] In what he terms the "ethics of talk," Grant (1996) offers several principles for promoting orderly and democratic classroom discussions.

Weaver consider the teacher to be the one best positioned to direct classroom talk, either to students' advantage or the reverse. And, while this stands to reason, we learned in Chapter 4 that the C of P can have a strong influence on the teacher's practice. In this case, Emily's intention was certainly not to dominate the discussion; she resorted to "talking too much" because she was uncomfortable with the silence that followed her attempts to 'get the discussion going.' The authors make the point that "the ideal of a orderly, rational discussion governed by mutually agreed-upon rules of engagement runs counter to Bakhtin's dialogism, where every utterance competes with a multitude of historic, cultural, and social voices" (p. 327). While this may be true, it did not inform my research site, where the students clearly did not (yet) need to conform to Grant's (1996) "ethics of talk" principles. Although the evidence was limited, this example gave me a sense of what Emily meant by the 'like pulling teeth' comment. While I did not consider simply avoiding discussion to be the answer, I wondered if groupwork could be at least a partial solution.

"Discuss, Discuss"

What happened when Emily introduced changes to the way in which students were used to having instructional discourse organized in the classroom? For the first two projects students were free to choose their groups members and, not surprisingly, groups were single gender, and, as much as possible, formed on the basis of friendship.[11] While this made the process somewhat less uncomfortable, it was clear from the beginning that the groupwork component of the unit challenged familiar classroom practices. The first indication was the degree of difficulty the students had in simply forming groups, as can be seen in the following fieldnote excerpt:

Fieldnotes, January 20, 2000

After Emily explained the assignment to them, she asked them to get into groups of three and begin. No one moved. She told them again, "You need to move around into groups of three." Still, no one moved. Emily then gave more directions to get them going, but the students did not actually do so until Emily began to physically 'help' them move their desks. Eventually they got themselves into groups of threes (3 boy and 2 girl groups). I was surprised by how much encouragement it took to get them to move.

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[11] Lensmire (2000) uses the term *friendship groups* to refer to the ways that children in classroom communities divide themselves up–for better or for worse–when given the chance.

Something similar happened with the next assignment that the students were to do in groups. After Emily had given the instructions, she asked them to get into groups of three or four. No one moved. She repeated the instructions. Again, nothing happened. Emily then said, "*HELLO!* You have to physically pick up your desks and move." (Fieldnotes, February 1, 2000) With a little 'physical' help from Emily, they moved. I found it rather unusual that Grade 9 students would require so much direction and 'encouragement' from the teacher to form groups. With doing groupwork, I am much more familiar with having to very carefully request that students *not* move until the instructions have been given. What this suggests to me is that the students were clearly not used to this routine, at least not in *this* context. My observations in the class support this suggestion.

After the students had had a couple opportunities to work in single gender groups, Emily asked if I would like to observe mixed gender groupings. I eagerly said yes, as I had seen very little interaction between boys and girls up to that point. After Emily introduced the lesson (which was on stereotypes), she told the students: "Ok, this activity is going to be hard, but we'll try it." She was right–it was hard. Getting the students into their single gender groups had not been easy; however, getting them into mixed gender groups was far more challenging and highlighted the gender dichotomy. Emily explained how the groups would be formed. She had two cups, one with girls' names and the other with boys' names. She would pick one name from each cup for partners; as there were more boys, some boys would have to work together. Immediately, I heard some murmuring from the boys. As Emily began to call the names, there was a fair bit of giggling, certainly loudest when Adrena's name was announced. Once again, when it came time to form groups, nobody moved. This time, though, Emily had to persuade them much more strenuously. After considerable 'encouragement' from Emily (which included physical assistance), slowly they began to move. Some pairs found this particularly difficult, as the following example makes clear. When the two pairs of partners (Darith/Chanda and Nouy/Roeun) had arranged themselves, the two boys and the two girls were seated much closer to each other than they were to their partner. From my vantage point, it appeared rather ridiculous; the partners were supposed to be having a discussion, yet their positions made hearing their partner next to impossible. This did not pose quite the problem one would have expected, though–this was because the partners were not "discussing" (although there was some giggling between the two boys and whispering between the two girls.)

Once the students had been given adequate time to have begun the assigned task, Emily announced: "The room should be buzzing with talk." To which I responded in my fieldnotes: "Needless to say, it's not." (Fieldnotes, February 3, 2000) A short while later (with little having changed), Emily informed the students that "I'm marking you on how much you're talking and interacting with each other." Although more pronounced with this activity due to the mixed gender groups, the lack of discussion had been an issue with the first two assignments as well. For example, during the second assignment, the students had a series of questions about the movie, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which they were to discuss. At one point, when very little was being said, Emily urged the students "Discuss, discuss." (Fieldnotes, February 1, 2000).

Clearly, asking students to get into groups and discuss was contrary to 'business as usual' for these students. Disrupting community practices made the established practices more visible. As the reader will know from the previous chapter, I was already aware of students' reluctance to talk in certain contexts in class and familiar with the self-imposed gender divisions. The groupwork had the effect of magnifying the regular practices within the C of P. Students, used to talking socially with friends of the same gender, were being asked to engage in discussion-based assignments with students of the opposite gender. As it had in the section on social relations, ethnicity factored into these dynamics as well, but gender definitely took center stage. The two pairs of students mentioned earlier (Darith/Chanda and Nouy/Roeun) serve as an example. During the interviews when we were discussing the groupwork, I asked the students what it had been like to work with a partner of the opposite sex. Darith explained that "It was pretty hard for both of us, because you don't really know them, but it turned out pretty good, 'cause like she's Cambodian, so I just talked to her." The common ethnicity made it easier. His partner, Chanda, told me that it was "kind of difficult because some girls and guys don't really talk to each other that much." This described Roeun particularly well. Dith told me that while he did not mind the activity, "it was probably Roeun that didn't enjoy it.

He's not used to working with girls so he had to adjust to that. He usually works with us guys. He doesn't mind working with guys, but with girls it's a different thing." Hông (who didn't mind "because Carline was kind of mature about it") also identified Roeun: "Like, he kind of was always smiling about it and stuff, 'cause he's always with Dith. They're really close to each other." Roeun confirmed that he was uncomfortable: "It was very strange because I never worked with a girl before." And, while Dith and Hông are quick to say that they "did not mind" working with girls, they appeared to be far from comfortable.

Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) make the point that teachers cannot just put students in groups and expect them to 'go to it' with positive results. Given the makeup of the Grade 9 language arts C of P, this remark is especially apt. Rather, for groupwork to succeed, teachers must carefully design collaborative tasks that are interesting to students and they must help students develop group skills. In my opinion, Emily had designed interesting collaborative tasks; however, she clearly had not adequately helped her students to develop group skills. With the groupwork, (as with individual work), Emily did not always provide the scaffolding her students needed. Not only had the students been asked to do things that they were neither familiar nor comfortable with, they had been asked to do so without adequate preparation. Comments such as "I'm marking you on how much you're talking and interacting with each other" did not provide the kind of support these students needed. The groupwork disrupted established community practices; those classroom practices, in turn, interfered with the groupwork. The result was that the groupwork was less successful than it could have been for the students. For me, however, this proved to be enlightening–one more instance of the light getting through the crack.

The Groupwork Continuum

Clearly, the groupwork was a disruption of community practices. I have explained how difficult it was for the students to form groups. What happened once the students actually got in their groups? To more closely examine the opportunities for learning made available by groupwork, I turned to the literature. As I had discovered with discussion, I learned that I needed to become better informed as to the intricacies and particulars of 'groupwork.'

Many critics of IRE practices in classrooms (e.g. Long & Porter, 1985) recommend small-groupwork, citing its advantages in providing students with more turns at talk (Toohey & Day, 1999). I showed in 'like pulling teeth' that, although recitation was not a common practice in Emily's class, nevertheless the students were not getting much "access to the floor." Given this context, the prospect of groupwork appeared to be a more promising course of inquiry. I speculated that small-group work would allow for more "turns at talk," which in turn, would open up more opportunities for students to appropriate academic discourse. In like vein, (with their large-scale research into eighth- and ninth-grade English classes) Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) expected small groups to be "dependable sites of dialogic peer interaction" (p. 64). They predicted that small-groupwork and discussion would enhance achievement by engaging students substantively, especially compared with lecture, drill work, and recitation. Rather, in the eighth-grade study they found that increased time spent in small-group work seemed to result in lower achievement in literature.

They then examined this finding in more detail in a follow-up study of ninth-grade literature classes, by distinguishing between various types of small-group work to see whether some were more effective than others.[12] Nystrand and Gamoran learned that small-group work involved a great range of activities–from highly teacher structured (collaborative seatwork) to student structured (autonomous problem solving). They placed these two extremes on a continuum with structured problem solving in the middle (p. 65).[13] Study results showed that small-group work was successful to the extent that teachers clearly defined goals and tasks at the same time that they encouraged students to generate conclusions, solve open-ended problems, and address authentic questions rather than simply manipulate information and answer study questions.[14] Small-group work appeared ineffective because groups were being used ineffectively; many of the assignments could just as well have been done individually.[15] In fact, most small-group work proved to be 'collaborative seatwork,' which actually had a negative effect on learning. The format should take advantage of the opportunities for intellectual collaboration that are made possible by the group setting.

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[12] Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) were particularly interested in the features of small-groupwork that promote thinking.

[13] The degree of student autonomy in the groups was measured on a scale: 1) teacher-structured; 2) prescripted task; 3) limited student interaction; 4) significant student interaction; 5) autonomous groupwork.

[14] The authors define 'authenticity' as whether or not questions had 'prespecified' answers and 'collaborative seatwork' as essentially written recitation done by students working together.

> The point of small-group instruction...should be to design work that draws on the potential for cooperation and collaboration in the small group. If successful small-group work depends on the teacher setting up open-ended rather than prescripted tasks and on the students having coherent conversations generating insights, then teachers must carefully match small group-work to suitable tasks. (p. 71)

Nystrand and Gamoran's explanation of the small group-work component of their study guided my inquiry of the groupwork in which the student participants were engaged. My examination will focus in particular on the fourth (and last) assignment that the students did within the racism unit. There are two reasons for this choice: 1) the students had made progress in terms of working together, so I was able to make some pertinent observations; and 2) this assignment serves as an appropriate example to illustrate what I learned from the literature that is of particular significance to my study. The assignment required the students to do research, share the research with group members in a structured format, and, as a concluding activity, to give a presentation on their topic to the class at large.

Where did this assignment fall on the groupwork continuum? During my literature search on groupwork, I came across an example that illustrates well the far left end of the continuum–collaborative seatwork (group setting is unnecessary as task can be done without student interaction). In her study of junior high girls, Finders (1997) notes that one of the students in her study (Cleo) did not see any value in sharing with peers. From Cleo's perspective, there was no sense of collaborative work; rather, the assigned groupwork was "really individual activities" (p. 108). In contrast, I would place the group research project to be (near) the far right end of the continuum–the group setting was essential to getting the task done. The idea for the research assignment came from one of the language arts in-service sessions Emily had attended.

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[15] See Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) Chapter 2 for a complete description of study results.

Fieldnotes, February 10, 2000
Emily had planned to have the students start their essays this week, but got the idea for a research project instead from the in-service she'd attended on Tuesday. She was quite excited–this isn't the first time that she's changed plans because of those sessions. Emily explained how the groups were formed yesterday. Each student reached into a hat and got a slip of paper, with either Rosa Park, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X or Brown versus the Board of Education written on it. Who they picked was who they would research–there are four students in each group. For the first part of the class, the students worked in library to get research material. They were required to have 3 sources–one from the internet, one from a book and one from encyclopedia.

While this provided the basis for meaningful research projects, the students could have completed the work on their own. It was the second aspect of the assignment that necessitated the group setting.

Fieldnotes, February 10, 2000
At 9:10 they returned to the class for the next part of the research assignment. Emily passed out handouts, explaining to the students that they would each be responsible for a different role within the group, as either connector, facilitator, investigator, or summarizer. She then went over the role descriptions–each group member will be given a copy of one article and assigned a role.[16] *Today they were working on filling the sheets out; tomorrow they would present the information to their group. This process would be repeated with the next article, except they would have a different role.*

As Emily began to explain that each student would have a different role/ responsibility within the group, I realized that she was describing a version of Daniel's (1994) literature circles. I was familiar with this group activity in the context of fiction; Emily was adapting the roles to use with non-fiction. Space and time restraints do not allow me to explain the details of this extended assignment fully, but it certainly was not the type of groupwork assignment that Nystrand classifies as collaborative seatwork, in which the group setting is gratuitous. While each group member had a different responsibility, they needed to come together to complete the task. Nystrand also stresses the importance of asking students questions without "prespecified" answers. When Emily first explained the roles to the students, she noted that the job of the facilitator is to encourage discussion through questions–she made a point of saying that these should be questions you do NOT know the answer to (for example, not “”What’s his name?” but “How do you think he coped with such and such?”). After Emily gave the instructions and the students settled to work, I visited the groups. Sarun proudly told me that he was the ‘facilitator,’ explaining that his teacher had said that this was a challenging role because the facilitator had to keep the discussion going.[17] Given the nature of the assignment, one could have expected this instance of groupwork to be a “dependable site of dialogic peer interaction” (Nystrand and Gamoran, 1997, p. 64). While this proved to be the case to a degree, from what I observed, the activity did not reach full potential. This becomes clear in the following fieldnote excerpts, written the next time I visited the class–by this point, the students were working on the second article, and had new roles.

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[16] In brief, role descriptions are as follows: the connector finds connections between text and larger world; the facilitator encourages discussion with questions; the investigator describes setting and main characters of text; the summarizer prepares a brief summary of reading. All are then presented to the group.

Fieldnotes, February 14, 2000
Emily asked the class to get into their groups (which I noticed that they did with minimum effort this time) and then she went around to check homework (they were to have filled in the sheets and from what I saw when I went around later, several did not have their homework done). Emily told them that they were each to give a two-min presentation to their group, in the following order–green (summarizer); blue (investigator); pink (connector); purple (facilitator). As soon as Emily had finished giving instructions, she left the class with the new boy, Dylan. I could hear Justin give his presentation on Rosa Parks to his group. In the other groups, some of the students are very quiet so I am unsure if they are on task, but the group closest to me (Sarun, Dith, Carline and Shu) is not on task. When I went over to the group, I could see that Sarun has not done his homework (his sheet is blank). When I asked him about his presentation, he told me some things about Martin Luther King (cool speech, etc.), but obviously he is not reading. As I visited the other groups, and saw other students not on task, it struck me that this is potentially an excellent activity but that there is a gap between what is *happening and what* could be *happening. When Emily returned, she could tell that most groups were not taking the assignment seriously, so she told them that she will give them a bit more time and instead they can each make a presentation to the whole class, rather than to group members: "Maybe this will get some more discussion going. Reread, fill in any gaps, whatever you need to do to prepare. I'll be listening to hear that you do." Is she saying this to scare them?*

Emily’s directive seemed to have an effect on the students as they settled down to work (whether spurred on by motivation or fear, I was unsure). Something else had changed, as well. Not only did Emily stay in the room, but also she went around to the groups as they worked. I was struck by the difference this made for the students.

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[17] Emily certainly knew how challenging *that* role was.

Fieldnotes, February 14, 2000
Emily went around to groups as they were working and asked questions of the students to get them focused on the sheet. It is clear that what many of the students need is some extra help/direction with this activity. It is an excellent one, but they need guidance as they have not done an activity like this before and they find it very challenging. In my opinion, this is one example of time well spent for these students. After a bit of time, Emily provided them with a choice: "Let's make a decision. You can have another try at the group activity or you can present to the class." I was not surprised when all students voted for another try. Emily then went through the instructions again, focusing on how there should be one *person only talking at a time and the facilitator should be leading the discussion. She reiterated that she would be coming around, listening and marking them. This time they are more on task–although the 'threats' are likely a factor, the extra instructions/support provided have clearly helped them. After a bit, she asked them to stop so that she could tell them that when they are doing their presentations, they should not* just read *but try to* discuss. *This will be an expectation when they do their group presentations to the whole class (at the end of the assignment). Does she realize what she is asking them?*

I have included these lengthy fieldnote excerpts because they represent one of the most important insights gleaned over the course of my research project. In the first excerpt, my observations point to the disparity between what the students were actually accomplishing and what they could be achieving. In the second excerpt, my notes relate the steps Emily took to do what was necessary to begin to close the gap. This was one of the very few times that I saw Emily give her students the type of scaffolding/support I thought they needed. Still, the opening/crack was wide enough to admit plenty of light. It provided me with the evidence that the scaffolding did make a difference; still, for these students, it was not enough. As suggested earlier, there were reasons why Emily did not always give her students adequate support needed: 1) the notion that she was babying them (which would not help to prepare them for high school); 2) the reality that she was often busy doing other things (in the example here, attending to a new student; 3) the possibility that, in some instances, she was unsure as to how to best move her students forward. In the case of the groupwork, another factor may be that she did not want to interfere; the degree of appropriate teacher intervention is commonly debated within the 'literature circle' research. I do not mean to suggest that the students did not benefit from the research project. On the contrary, I think they learned a lot–about group work, research and racism. For example, during the interview with Sarun, he told me that the racism unit was "pretty cool."

> I learned about Martin Luther King Jr. and his struggle for freedom for Black people and other people. I like his stuff. I learned how the Black people struggled just to live everyday life and stuff. They've been tormented by the Whites. I learned about the marching, I learned about Martin Luther King's speech...his speech is pretty cool–I have a dream. I like his speech.

Quite something for the boy who never completed his work. Although I had been unable to see the group presentations to the class, Emily made particular note of Sarun's group: "His whole group did a great job, including Sarun, and their group received the highest mark." I do believe, however, that they could have learned more, had they been adequately scaffolded, both cognitively and behaviorally, as we shall see next.

Groupwork Dynamics

The groupwork also proved to be an appropriate context in which to examine more closely how the entrenched social practices (as described in Chapter 4) played out in the groupwork. While some advocates of small-group work hypothesize that horizontal status relations among students will allow collaboration in accomplishing school tasks, small-group conversations do not always appear so facilitative of access to community knowledge resources (Toohey & Day, 1999, p. 49). Finders (1997) addresses the problematic side of groupwork in her study of adolescent girls. The teachers in her study most often assumed that junior high students found working with same-age peers valuable and comfortable, thus privileging groupwork; however, many students in her study resisted groupwork. Furthermore, students' perceptions of groups ran counter to most currently accepted pedagogical approaches.

> If one accepts the Vygotskian notion that students learn best in the presence of experts or more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky, 1978), one can see how deeply problematic the issue becomes in a classroom where a teacher might view working together as sound pedagogy, while some students view such practices as "cheating and stealing." (pp. 108-109)

Given that my research is grounded, to a considerable degree, in Vygotskian sociocultural theory, Finders' findings are relevant. Naturally the particular dynamics varied, but concerns regarding groupwork were expressed by the students in my study as well. Some students reported that they really liked doing groupwork, whereas others definitely preferred working alone. I noticed that, by and large, the students who liked the groupwork were the weaker students, while the stronger students would, had they the choice, rather not work in groups. The benefits appeared to be greater for the weaker students. Were these students (as Finders suggests with the Vygotskian implication) learning more, or were they merely reaping the benefits of work done by others? Perhaps not surprisingly, the differing gendered approaches towards schoolwork were manifested in the groupwork.

One aspect of the groupwork that proved to be particularly revealing were the 'pie charts' Emily had students fill out following the completion of the group research project.

Fieldnotes, February 1, 2000
As for how she will evaluate the group research project, Emily explained that there will be an individual and a group mark for this project and that the students *will determine the individual mark. She will give a paper pie to each group and they have to divide it up as to who deserves what. (for example, so and so did more work so he/she gets a larger piece of pie). Should be interesting to see how this plays out.*[18]

Interesting indeed, as the following fieldnote entry shows:

Fieldnotes, February 28, 2000
This morning during class when the students were to be working on the racism essays, I noticed Carline and Adrena were engaged in animated conversation. They appeared to be discussing a piece of paper, so I went over to have a look. They were discussing the pie charts representing the work each member had done. They showed me theirs and explained. Carline was upset because, in her opinion, the boys in her group were friends and so they had given 25% for each group member. She thought this was unfair as she thought she had done more of the work (her pie shows Carline's share at 45%). Adrena, on the other hand, said her group divided things up fairly.

Sensing some conflict surrounding this task, I pursued the topic during student interviews. With copies of the pie charts on hand, I asked students about the experience. I followed up on the comments made by Carline and Adrena (and inquired as to the other groups as well). The responses proved to be of interest. Although Carline (who felt that she had done more of the work than the boys who were in her group) had left Coalfield School before the interviews began, one of her group members, Dith, offered his perspective as to the manner in which Carline had divided her pie: "Maybe she felt she put more effort into it. She gave us, like, what she felt." Which did he think was the more accurate representation? After a short pause, Dith replied: "I think maybe 25% 'cause I don't see how a person could give more than 25%, 'cause we're only doing one thing, and everybody else is doing one thing, too." It was a moment before I realized what he meant–if each of four group members was responsible for a different job, how could anyone get more than 25%? Of course, this meant presuming that the four responsibilities were equal. Judging from the other groups, though, Dith's thinking represented a minority position. Adrena had claimed that her group divided things up fairly. While group members may not have disagreed about the allocation of marks, they certainly had some concerns as to the work allotment itself.

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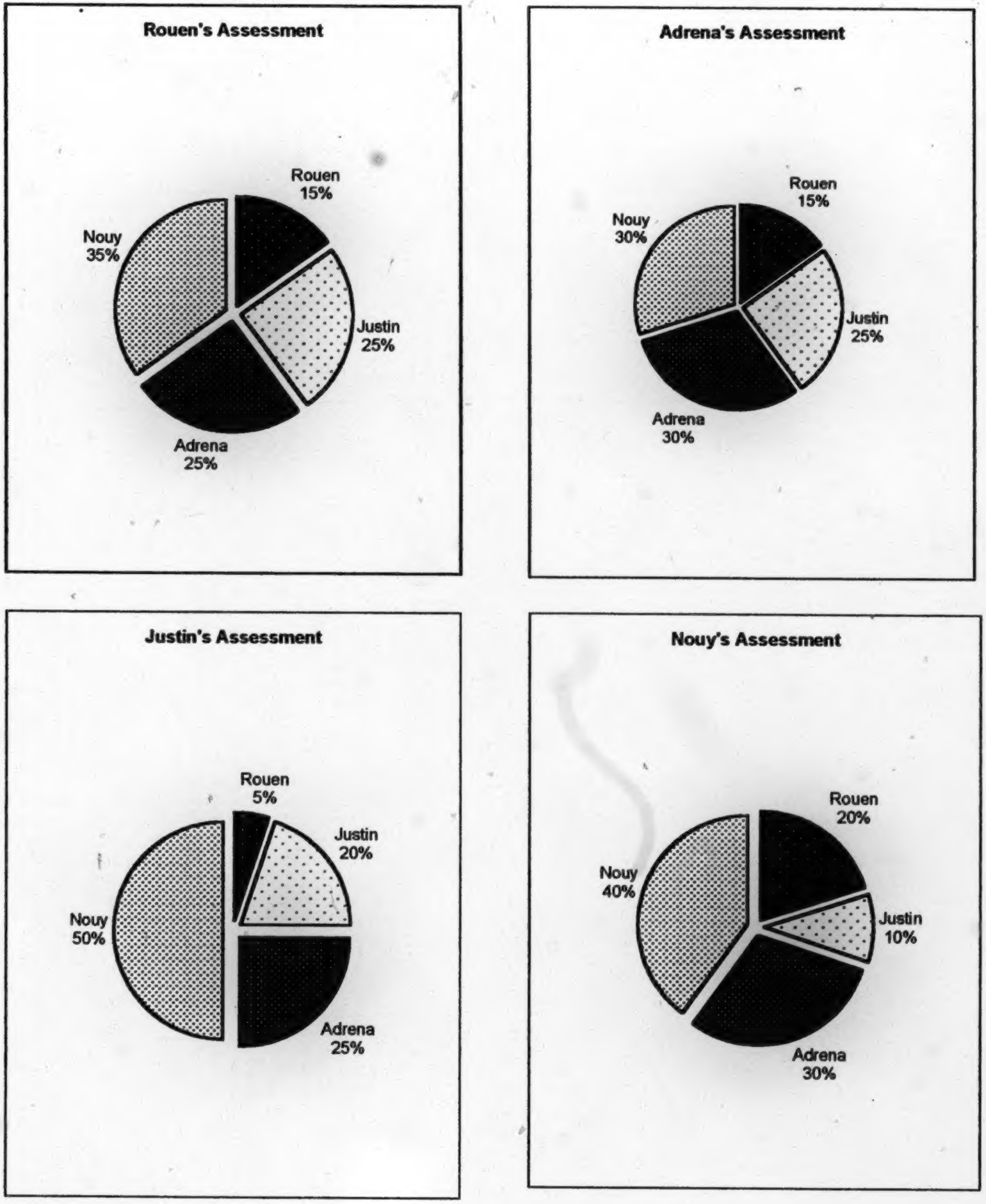
[18] My understanding of Emily's explanation was that each group would have one pie and that members would have to come to a consensus as to how it would be divided; rather, each student was given a pie to fill in.

Chart 1: Piecharts Displaying Students' Assessment of Group Work



Adrena described the pie chart as a "different experience:" "I think it was good for us to be able to reflect on our group. I think the most true ones would have to have been mine and Nouy's. We were the two that realized who did what, and like, we were the most organized, the most thought out." As for the groupwork itself, Adrena felt that some group members had not pulled their weight.

> It was frustrating. Oh, my God, was it frustrating because you had to count on certain people to have their work done, and they wouldn't, or they were counting on you, and you missed a little bit of it, or the whole group didn't get it done, or something always seemed to go wrong, whether it was the discussion, the homework not being done, not being prepared, not being there, forgetting books, like, there was always something that went wrong.

I asked Adrena if she thought gender played a role in the way the groupwork had transpired.

> I think the guys made it seem like the girls had to do everything. Like the girls had to be the responsible ones, and the ones that would get us through the work. I think that's 'cause the girls are the ones that normally get the praise for doing their work, and having their homework done, and that. (similar to Kim's comment in gender)

Nouy, a very hard working student, also identified gender as a problem within the group.

> Group projects? I don't like them very well because Mrs. C chose the groups and some guys are very irresponsible. Like, they don't do their work and while you are doing other work, they don't do very much. I did a lot of the writing.[19]

Because of the nature of the groupwork, Nouy had struggled with filling in the pie charts:

> This was very difficult for me. It was hard to get it done. Like the other people, I have to ask them, "Are you done? Which part are you on?" And, when it was the day for us to present, I thought the whole thing was done but then I found out one person wasn't finished their timeline, so we did not present that day. But, I think it was just a lame excuse. I felt pretty depressed and sad I guess because we got a mark that I didn't want.

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[19] Students considered this to be the hardest part.

I found a comment in my fieldnotes that shows I, too, had questioned the respective work load done by girls and boys:

Fieldnotes, February 28, 2000

This was their last day for the students to work on their projects–the group presentations are tomorrow. They were not sitting with their groups any more as they were each working on their own part, but Emily told them they may want to check with their group members, to make sure that they have got their parts done, and then to get on with their own work. The boys begin moving, getting posters from the counter. There's lots of talking. The girls are sitting, already writing. When I later noticed that most of the boys were drawing, I wondered if perhaps they had talked the girls into doing the presentation parts. I commented on this to Emily, and she said that she had made that observation, too. Out of the blue, I hear Adena's voice announce: "All the women are doing the work. All the men are fooling around."

I was curious as how the boys felt about the groupwork.[20] The following interview exchange with Roeun provides a glimpse into the "other" side of the experience.

> Lynne: Here are the pie charts from your group project. What was it like doing these?
>
> Roeun: It shows how lazy I was. (laughs)
>
> Lynne: And, why were you?
>
> Roeun: It was really boring to me. Those people wouldn't let me do anything.
>
> Lynne: They didn't let you do anything?
>
> Roeun: They actually took all the work, so I just sit there.
>
> Lynne: What was your role?
>
> Roeun: The talking, or something.
>
> Lynne: Why didn't they let you do anything?
>
> Roeun: They think I can't accomplish anything.
>
> Lynne: Why do they think that?
>
> Roeun: 'Cause I usually don't. (laughs)
>
> Lynne: How did you feel about that?
>
> Roeun: Well, I was kind of mad, so I just sat there.
>
> Lynne: Would you have preferred to be doing something?
>
> Roeun: I would like to do some research.
>
> Lynne: So, did you say that?

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[20] Unfortunately, I was unable to interview Justin.

Roeun: Nope.

Lynne: How come?

Roeun: 'Cause it looked like they were getting it all done.

Lynne: Looking at Justin's pie here, the girls have the bigger pieces of pie. Why?

Roeun: 'Cause the girls did all the research. All I did was draw a picture.

Lynne: And, how did the girls get to do all the research?

Roeun: I think Justin told them to do it.[21]

These comments emphasise the degree to which the students took the class norms into the groupwork. I found Roeun's comments to be particularly enlightening. I learned that neither girls nor boys were very happy with "the way things were." While the girls were resentful of doing more than their share of the work, Roeun (at least) was wishing he could do work that was more challenging–research rather than "just drawing." However, both girls and boys had set themselves up for this state of affairs: the girls by always being "the responsible ones" and Roeun by "usually not accomplishing anything."

I do not mean to suggest that the uneven distribution of work was confined to mixed gender relations. In the previous chapter I spoke at length about the strong support network that existed between the 'oldtimer' boys, in particular. I mentioned that Hông held a unique position within this group as a male who not only was an academic achiever, but who also tried to encourage his friends "to get their work done." The lengths that Hông was willing to go to in order to fulfill this role become clear with the following incident. Near the end of term, the class worked on a medieval unit (this will be discussed later in the chapter). The students had to do research on different aspects of life in medieval times (for example, castles, housing, clothing, food, health and disease, tournaments); for this assignment, they had the choice of either working alone or with a partner. The final component of the assignment was a presentation to the class; requirements included written information as well as a visual of some sort. I had been keeping track in my fieldnotes as to which students were working alone, and which students were working with a partner. I was therefore surprised on presentation day when Hông and Darith presented together on 'health and disease.' My understanding was that Hông was working alone on this topic. I questioned him about this during the interview. He told me that "uhm, actually, to tell the truth, actually like Darith wasn't done his project, right, so I thought I'll let him be in my group, so at least he can get some marks." That explained it! When questioned further, I found out that this had been Darith's idea, and that Hông had agreed. While he was willing to help out his friend, the impromptu plan had not turned out quite as Hông would have liked.

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[21] Adrena told me that she told everyone what to do. Other groups drew straws to determine which tasks they would do.

> It was really strange ...my mark was pretty low. Darith got more than me. His voice was clearer and he kind of got a large portion to read, too, because it was my idea to read just like a little bit 'cause I'm not so good at reading out loud. So, he got more than me. It kind of backfired.

Although he was a strong student, Hông was very quiet in class. During the interview, he told me how he found public speaking to be very difficult. Darith, on the other hand, was very social and much more comfortable with having to speak in front of the class. What had these students learned from this experience?

As can be seen, entrenched social and discourse practices interfered with group processes. On the other hand, progress had been made. Through the flaws in the groupwork experiments, glimmers of light were visible. The following fieldnote excerpt, written the day the students began the research projects, represents one of many examples.

Fieldnotes, February 10, 2000
When the class was working in the library I noticed that Justin and Adrena were actually having a conversation–they were seated at different, but adjacent tables and talking. I went closer to hear if they were talking about the assignment or not. They are in the same group, and they were looking at books on Rosa Park. I heard them say something about her parents, 1913...They are on task. So, these mixed groups are getting some interaction going!

This excerpt describes what sounds like a commonplace incident–in this class, though, as the reader will know, this occurrence was anything but ordinary. The disruptions *were* resulting in change. They had also caused student discomfort. Was the price too high?

To Disrupt or not to Disrupt?

I came to think of the group projects as the groupwork 'experiments' because, in a sense, they were done for the purpose of my research. We wanted to 'test' what would happen when the students were asked to work in groups and with members of the opposite sex–practices the students were not familiar with. While I anticipated the groupwork with eagerness (and it did provide me with 'interesting' data), as the racism unit progressed, I began to question what we were asking the students to do. These doubts increased after the research was over and I was able to reflect upon this aspect of my study.

Although we had not planned the groupwork as a *deliberate* 'disruption', these experiments had the effect of interrupting established practices within the C of P. In the course of my literature search, I discovered a study in which 'interruption' for the purpose of research was deliberate. As a group of university- and school-based teacher researchers, Alvermann et al. (1997) attempted to alter or interrupt certain gendered discursive practices that threatened to reproduce some of the same inequities in classroom talk about texts that had been noted, but not challenged.[22] They "used a feminist theoretical framework as a lens for examining how particular power relations operating in their classrooms governed how students interacted in their discussions of assigned subject-matter texts" (p. 73). The authors wanted to examine how particular power relations operating in their classrooms governed how students interacted in their discussions of assigned subject-matter texts.

One section of the article, in particular, provides an interesting contrast to my study. Sally, one of the teacher-researchers, was leading a discussion on John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947/1989) in her eighth-grade classroom. Students had been asked to consider a series of quotations from the first chapter of *The Pearl.* One of the quotations presented students with an opportunity to explore gender issues. Students' responses tended to be very conservative (for example, male as dominant/head of the household). Even though Sally had strong feelings about this, she avoided any discussion that might challenge students' views, concerned that discussion of family values might be a problem in that community. She did not feel adequately prepared to facilitate discussions in which her students were asked to deal with gender-related issues. Reading this, I was reminded of the student participants' reading of *The Pearl* early in my research study. I followed up my notes with the following: "This is a different issue than I observed with *The Pearl*–rather, no discussion at all!" My second comment, however, pointed to the similarities: "Students were shaping Sally's practices and choices, too!" Although the reasons were different, Sally had been influenced (in some ways against her better judgment) by the particular dynamics in her classroom. Sally expressed her frustration with the researcher whose fieldnotes had been full of comments questioning *why* she had not attempted to interrupt gendered discursive practices by asking students challenging questions. The university–based researchers struggled with Sally's decision to opt out of the original agreement.

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[22] The study took place in a graduate-level content-literacy class, a 7th grade language arts class, and an 8th grade language arts class.

> To have pressured Sally to stay focused on interrupting gendered discursive when she was obviously uncomfortable in that role would have been at odds with feminist pedagogy's ethic of caring. At the same time, to have dismissed Sally's decision as inconsequential to the project's purpose would have been tantamount to denying that "gender matters"–feminist pedagogy's central tenet. (Lather, 1991)

Although the particulars of my research story were very different, I could identify with the researchers' reflection that "as with many things we do in our teaching lives, we found it was easier to *think* about changes we would like to make in our classroom practices than it was to actually *make* them" (Alvermann et al., 1997, p. 95). My job, as researcher, was to *think* about changes in classroom practices; I was not in the position to *make* them (which, of course, makes them easier to think about). This was something with which I was uncomfortable.

I was also uneasy about the disruptions caused to the students. A case in point is the activity when the girls and boys were in mixed-gender pairs for the first time. Should we have placed students in such obvious discomfort for the purpose of my research project? Emily may have had the students engage in similar groupwork activities had I not been there; however, she had presented the groupwork as being for my benefit. Certainly, being able to work in groups and carry on a discussion with members of the opposite sex are skills that would be to the students' advantage. In Chapter 4, the suggestion was made that these practices would be expectations in high school. And, the groupwork did seem to have made a difference. Emily reported having noticed changes, as can be seen from the following interview excerpt.

> I think one of the best things I did this year to help them were the public speeches.[23] I think they did a great job on those. And, another was the group projects. I thought it was interesting when they were put into different groups that were either same gender or both, you know. I thought those types of things seemed to change the dynamics of the class after I did them.

Despite my discomfort, I had noticed some constructive changes as well. Emily's comment called to mind a fieldnote entry I had made during a class following the groupwork component of the racism unit. Students were working on essays at the time.

Fieldnotes, February 10, 2000

Emily was called out for a phone call and was gone for quite a while. I noticed how 'social' the students were, the girls as well as they boys, which was unusual. I found myself thinking back to one of my earliest visits when they were working on a written assignment. My memory *is that it was much more quiet in class, and that fewer students were talking and interacting. My* impression *is that the class as a whole is much more interactive now, and I wonder if any of the change can be attributed to the groupwork they have done. Just a thought, one that I should check out with Emily.*

I mentioned this to Emily. Had she noticed anything? She continued her explanation:

> Yeah, after that I noticed that they interacted more as a group. And, that's when I started to find out that they called each outside of school. And, I don't know, it might have just been a coincidence that that happened, but maybe they had never done it before, and that sort of showed them that it was safe to do it–if it's okay if we talk in school.

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[23] A unit on oral language followed the groupwork. For the first assignment, students had to memorize a poem and recite it to the class; in the second assignment, they had to write a speech and then deliver it to the class. Students were provided with specific criteria for marking. Emily videotaped the speeches, which were then reviewed and critiqued. When Emily first described the unit she told me that she thought I would be interested because it was "oral language." She was particularly pleased with the outcome of this unit. In retrospect, I wondered if one of the reasons why Emily had valued this unit so much was because the students were responsible for 'delivering the discourse,' so to speak. With this type of assignment, while the "dialogic potential" was extremely limited, there were no awkward silences for the teacher. Rather, the students were in front of the class and the discomfort was theirs.

She may be right. And, while I think the students did learn from and grow through the racism unit, the groupwork should have been structured for their benefit, not mine. Had this been done, organization would have looked different. For example, rather than putting the students (with no forewarning) into girl-boy groups (which certainly caused maximum 'disruption' for my purposes), the students could have been eased gradually into mixed-gender groups. For these students, beginning with paired groups was not appropriate. When they were working in the 4 person mixed-gender groups, I noted that "I think these groups are not as threatening as the two person mixed groups as there is less pressure for the students than when the groups had only one girl and one boy." (Fieldnotes, February 10, 2000). This is one example of many in which the students could have been more comfortable as well as more successful with the task at hand had they been adequately scaffolded.

I close this section with what Nystrand and Gamoran (1997) describe as the Bakhtinian explanation for the relative ineffectiveness of monologic instruction in promoting learning and conceptual change, compared with discussion and instructional conversation.

> Meaning "is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding" (Volosinov, 1973, p. 102). Yet it is just such active, responsive understanding that teachers fail to practice...when they determine prior to a given class the entire sequence of questions they will ask and what answers they will accept, and when they respond to correct student answers with a mere nod before moving on to the next question. In doing so, these individuals make no attempt at active, responsive understanding; they "want, in effect, to turn on a light bulb after having switched off the current. Only the current of verbal intercourse endows a word with the light of meaning". (p. 74. Citing, Volosinov, 1973, p. 102)

In the classes that comprised the racism unit, Emily was striving for a "process of active, responsive understanding." She had not switched off the current; nevertheless, Emily was having difficulty turning on the light bulb. The current was not running smoothly–this was not because Emily had scripted the classes in advance, though. Rather, at least two interconnected factors led to the 'short circuit': it was especially difficult to keep the current of verbal intercourse flowing with this particular group of students; while she had plenty of enthusiasm and great ideas, there were cracks in

Emily's skill set as a language arts teacher. The current may have been weak–still, some energy was getting through. In the conclusion to the chapter, we see how bright the light is when the current is switched on fully. In the next section, I use the example of 'newcomers' to further illustrate the way in which the group identity of the language arts C of P was in "continual construction, continual change, continual refinement" (Eckert, 2000, pp. 42-43).

'Breaking out of Boxes' (New Comers/New Practices)

> In that community ...., Irene Erianne brought in new ways of saying things, Judy O'Grady ratified them, and each of us picked them up more or less, depending on the degree to which we cast our lot with the aspects of the local Italian-American culture that they were tied to.

In the quotation above, Eckert (2000) recalls her high school community (in the late 50's) which had "its own way of talking." As was made clear in the previous chapter, the Grade 9 class at Coalfield School had "its own way of talking" and "its own way of doing." In many respects, these well-established practices had been developed and maintained by the 'old-timer' group within the C of P. Over the course of the year, though, there were a number of 'newcomers' to this C of P.[24] As with Irene Erianne, these newcomers affected the community in varying ways. Some, in particular those who attended irregularly and did not stay long, were barely noticed. Others were noticed. Adrena, whose voice is loud and determined throughout this dissertation, was hard to ignore.

Through Adrena, we are shown that "the different ways in which old-timers and newcomers establish and maintain identities conflict and generate competing viewpoints on the practice and its developments" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 115). While she was a legitimate participant, Adrena felt like an outsider, in many respects positioned on the periphery. Lori described Adrena's perception of her place in the community: "I think, for her, she does feel separate from the community–the community is everyone else, and she is just, you know, an outsider." Adrena responded to the position she held in varying ways. One was to resist, or at least attempt to resist, community practices. During our interview, Adrena told me that she did not like to "fit in boxes."

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[24] See chart in the introduction to Chapter 4.

> People are sheep nowadays. They're like puppets. They do what their friends want. I don't like being a sheep. I listen to the same music as some people, but I bring in other music.

Thinking that she might find the boxes to be especially confining at Coalfield School, I asked, "Has it been harder at this school to break out of boxes?"

> Oh, no, it's been, like, way easier. It's fun because, no, everybody expects you to be a certain way.

This did make sense. Adrena's remark speaks to the deep-rooted practices in the Grade 9 class, (as well as to the inherent power of the C of P). Adrena made many attempts to "break out of boxes"–or, in other words, disrupt community practices. In the following interview exchange, Adrena continues her comments (from the previous chapter) about the class being "sexually orientated."

> Adrena: Like, I walk into class and, just to be different, I was going to go sit right in middle of all the guys.
>
> Lynne: Do you mean when you first arrived?
>
> Adrena: Yeah.
>
> Lynne: And what happened?
>
> Adrena: I didn't. I went and sat with the girls. It just seems like there's so much pressure to either be this or be that in the school. And, then when we first started putting the desks the way they are now, in the 'U' shape, I wanted to go sit right smack in the corner between all the guys, just to see what they'd do.

Adrena resisted the pressure to conform to community practices; however, she did not always succeed, nor was it always fun. Despite her earlier comment, data suggest that Adrena struggled in her role as newcomer. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that

> (n)ewcomers are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they need to engage in the existing practice, which has developed over time: to understand it, to participate in it, and to become full members of the community in which it exists. On the other hand, they have a stake in its development as they begin to establish their own identity in its future. (p. 115)

Adrena certainly experienced this tension, likely more so than did many other newcomers. On the one hand, she wanted to belong; at the same time, she wanted to assert her own identity, which in significant ways, was contrary to community expectations. While she attempted to 'disrupt' some of the practices, according to my observations, she effected little change. Adrena may have disagreed with this, though. A case in point involved Darith, one of the Cambodian boys, who arrived to school one day with red streaks died in his hair. During her interview, Adrena made the comment that, "Darith copied my red hair, little wiener! Comes to school one morning with red hair, and it's like, hey!" I doubted that this had anything to do with Adrena–this was the fashion–of course, I could be wrong.

However, the way things were done in the Grade 9 class began to change somewhat with the arrival of Jamie, "another white female" in early May. The most noticeable initial change was for Adrena. In my fieldnotes for May 12th, I wrote: "What a different place school has become for Adrena since Jamie arrived. This is my thought–check out with Adrena." The following interview exchange confirms my thinking:

> Lynne: What's it like for you having Jamie enter the class at this point in time?
>
> Adrena: I love it! There's another white female! God! There's all of two white females in all the Grade 9 class.
>
> Lynne: Could you say a bit more about that, why you love it?
>
> Adrena: Well, 'cause, like it's somebody that I know I can talk to, like she felt the same when she came, 'cause I was late that morning, and she sat there and she's thinking like, "The Cambodian girls are here, and then there's all the Cambodian guys around her." Like, she sat there and she's like, all quiet. And, I came in and I sat right beside her, so we started talking, and that.
>
> Lynne: You seem to have really hit it off well.
>
> Adrena: Yeah. It's kind of a mutual bonding, we're both white. And, me and her sat and talked, and even though there's the few white people throughout the whole school, we still both feel like white outcasts in the white society.

Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to interview Jamie, so I cannot say as to how much Adrena was speaking *for* her here. Her description of how she felt when Jamie arrived called to mind an experience I had had many years previous when I was in Guatemala on an exchange trip. I became very ill and was hospitalized in a 'public' hospital; this proved to be one of the most frightening and at the same time enlightening experiences of my life. As a 'gringo,' I was quite a novelty–everyone came to stare. I recall how I felt one morning as a group of medical students did their rounds; amidst the group, I noticed a white female and she noticed me. I was incredibly relieved to see her, and we formed an instant connection. If we had crossed paths in numerous other places, we likely would not have even noticed each other. This memory was in my mind as Adrena described her mutual bonding with Jamie. For this to have happened in a school of predominantly white students, something more than simply being white would have been required. I asked her about this:

> Lynne: So, if you were at a different school, where there were lots of white kids, and Jamie came, do you think there would still be that kind of connection?
>
> Adrena: I think there would be, yes.
>
> Lynne: Okay, so you have more in common in than the fact that you're white females?
>
> Adrena: Yeah, like, oh, my god, it's scary how much we have in common! Our hands are the same size, like, we have so much in common, it's really weird.

Personally, I did not think that having hands the same size made for a meaningful connection. But, this provides another example as to how the inverted ethnic arrangements were played out in practice at Coalfield School. On Jamie's first day, I was interviewing a student in an empty classroom when the door opened and I heard Adrena say, "That's Lynne." When I asked Adrena about this later, she explained that she had volunteered to give Jamie a tour of the school. I asked her if she had taken on the responsibility of explaining to Jamie "how things are done around here" in an attempt to help her "learn the ropes" of her new school environment. She agreed that she had and let me know what she had considered important for her to know:

> Stay away from the Cambodian guys until they approach you 'cause, like, when I was first here, they wouldn't even come near me, and if I walked by anyone it was kind of like, they're going to get infested with white germs, or something. Like, get over it. And, I told her there's a few people that she shouldn't associate with, because I heard through the grapevine they're into drugs. So, there's a lot that I've kind of showed her, like.

I noticed how Adrena's description of the orientation she provided Jamie focused entirely on matters of a social nature, emphasizing Eckert's (1989) point that "one of the greatest errors in education is to assume that the larger social context of the school is irrelevant or even secondary to learning" (p. 179). I asked her if her introduction had included any "school related stuff." Adrena's response: "She knows where we are in classes, and like I help her with math 'cause she has to kind of learn the computer program." Still, it is clear what Adrena considers essential information. I wondered how different Jamie's introduction to the school may have been had Emily asked Kim, for example, to fill her in on what she "needed to know." This incident also caused me to think about how Adrena was, in a sense, acting as an 'old-timer.' Apparently, she had performed this service for Dylan, as well, when he arrived in February.

> Justin and Adrena, they filled me in about stuff. When I first got here, Adrena told me that, like, the guys are immature and all the girls sit on one side of the class and the guys always sit on the other one. And, Justin told that we usually get more homework in LA than all the other subjects.

Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that they "have begun to analyze the changing forms of participation and identity of persons who engage in sustained participation in a community of practice: from entrance as a newcomer, through becoming an old-timer with respect to new newcomers, to a point when those newcomers themselves become old-timers."(p. 56). Although I was not able to see it through, I had begun this process with Adrena.

It was with Jamie's arrival that I also became aware of certain changes within the C of P. I began to notice some of the behaviour and language that I would expect in a 'typical' Grade 9 classroom, noticeably absent in this one (as explained in social practices). Together, Jamie and Adrena were succeeding in disrupting some of the established classroom practices. My observations included: talking to boys, note passing, wearing provocative clothing, and use of words such as 'gay.' I also began to notice more interaction between girls and boys; although not widespread, it did represent an increase, as can be seen in the following selection of fieldnote excerpts. The class was working on an assignment, and most of the students had gone to the library. Emily was in and out of the classroom for the duration of the class. Part way through the period, the students had to attend a short assembly.

Fieldnotes, June 6, 2000

(8:55) Jamie is talking to Sarun, something about sharing information for the assignment (which is about the shunning of a celebrity). Jamie says, "Michael Jackson sucks." To which Sarun responds, "So, I like him." Then, she is talking to Justin and Dylan–asks

Justin, "Did you mean what you said on the phone yesterday?" Justin has a kind of shy smile on face (looks like he's blushing). Jamie stops. Justin and Dylan are whispering. Jamie asks Dylan if she can borrow a pen as she cannot find hers. He throws one over and then she finds hers. Returns his. Jamie and Adrena are quietly talking and Dylan and Justin, on the other side of the room, are doing the same. The only others in room at this point are Neary and Jeremy (who has his head on desk, yawning).

(9:05) Emily goes to collect the rest of the class from the library for the assembly. Jamie, on her way back from garbage, says "real GAY. You don't even know what you're talking about." This is directed to Justin. I'm not sure what she is referring to. The others return from the library and Jamie asks Hông (who is closest to her) to pass a paper to Dylan. Sarun tries to look at it and she says, "How rude." Jamie certainly has made inroads into this class. If she ever does bring back her permission form, I will have lots to ask her.[25]

(9:30) (Back from the assembly, with everyone in classroom). The fooling around continues back and forth between the two girls and two boys. Jamie crawls under her desk to go get paper from Dylan so she won't have to walk all the way around. Finally, Emily (who is working on computer) tells them that they need to be working or she'll split them up. Adrena takes paper from Jamie who says "don't read it" but she doesn't take it away and, of course, Adrena reads it and then writes on it. Jamie adds something. At this point, Emily goes to look and Adrena shoves it in her desk. Emily looks at her, but does not pursue (though she obviously knows paper is there). I wonder just why she doesn't pursue –to avoid a confrontation? because she thinks it's their business, not hers? Emily goes to library. Adrena takes out paper, folds it up, and throws it to Dylan who catches it. Justin and Dylan read it. Jamie tries to catch Darith's attention–asks "who are you doing?" He tells her, "Tommy Lee", but does not pursue conversation. He seems more quiet than usual today. Now, Justin is laughing at something and Jamie says, "real rude" then "How rude. What's so funny?" He keeps laughing, she keeps asking. He says, "No reason." To which Jamie responds, "You're laughing for no reason, my ass."

Some of my thoughts as to what was going on are reflected in the journal excerpt, below:

Journal reflection, June 6, 2000

I thought I'd heard Jamie say 'gay' a couple times before, but this time I was clearly NOT mistaken. This made me think of Eckert's comment–the student who "brought in new ways of saying things." Until Jamie came, I'd never heard the word gay being used in class. I mean the way so many young people have come to use it, as a general descriptor, rather than referring to someone as 'gay.' Although of course, there's that, too. Yet, I cannot wait at a bus stop, for example (full of junior high or senior high school students) without hearing it plenty. This seems to be one example of how Jamie is bringing the outside into this classroom. Also, as I was watching the scenario in class, I realized that

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[25] Unfortunately, Jamie did not bring back her permission form, so I was unable to interview her.

there was more voluntary boy-girl interaction in class this morning than the rest of the year combined!

I speculated as to these dynamics. Girls and boys flirting, note passing, the use of the word 'gay'–certainly not unusual behaviour for students in Grade 9, but descriptions of this nature were not to be found in my earlier fieldnotes. Was it that 'mainstream' students were reaching, in some sense, a critical mass (albeit a limited one)? After all, it was no coincidence that the two girls and two boys engaged in the extended social interaction were *the* four white students in the class. I was observing different behaviour from Justin, an 'old-timer' in the school C of P, within this new sub-grouping. Furthermore, Jamie *was* managing to engage some of the Cambodian boys as well in conversations, however constrained. Emily had noticed the increased social interaction between genders as well:

> I think about the way these guys are sitting here, next to these two sitting at the end (Adrena and Jamie), and they are interacting with her, and Jamie. She's a little cutie, and not loud like Adrena. You know, Darith, I think he sort of likes sitting over here, and getting into it.

School ended before I had a chance to find out more, but it would have been interesting to see what further inroads to the established order would have occurred had more time been available. Would, for example, Jamie's use of 'gay' in colloquial speech be 'ratified' and 'picked up' by the others? Newcomers were bringing 'mainstream' practices into the community; this, in turn, was transforming the C of P. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain this development accordingly: "Insofar as this continual interaction of new perspectives is sanctioned, everyone's participation is legitimately peripheral in some respect. In other words, everyone can to some degree be considered a 'newcomer' to the future of a changing community" (p. 117).

Emily's comparison of Adrena and Jamie raises another point. What role did personality play in these dynamics? This took me back to Darren's comment as to why Adrena was not easily accepted into the C of P. If Adrena had not been there to bond with, would Jamie have been absorbed into the C of P more easily? Or, would she have been more successful in effecting change on her own? Given the strong cultural influence shaping this C of P, I think some of the 'going against community norms' would have remained aberrations. An example is that girls in the Grade 9 class tended to dress very modestly. In the interview excerpt below, Emily explains the way in which Adrena and Jamie differ from their classmates in this regard:

> Even the way they dress is a lot more sexual–Jamie's and Adrena's dress is, you know, somewhat inappropriate. I know the boys have commented on Adrena's gut hanging out, like, that type of thing, but it's nothing like, she's hot, you know, I don't hear any of that.[26]

Conversely, given the powerful influence of 'mainstream' culture, my guess is that, even though these students remained a minority within *this* culture, they would make an impact. I do not want to give the impression that *only* newcomers disrupted community practices. I provided the example of Hông in the previous chapter. In the next section I relate an incident that not only disrupted community practices, but also turned the C of P upside down.

'Learning the Right Way Round?' (Carnivalesque Social Spaces)

> All over town people are putting on their costumes.
> (*Dressing up for the Carnival*, Shields, 2000, p. 1)

In the final section of Chapter 5, I examine another way in which classroom practices were disrupted, through an event I will refer to as the 'medieval feast.' As with the groupwork, the medieval feast could be described as a 'natural experiment,' an opening up of classroom practices which led to changed behaviour. The feast, however, disrupted community practices more than the groupwork did–some were turned 'upside down.' Yet, this event had the effect of opening up possibilities for learning. In the process, cracks in the C of P were widened; much light was admitted. In this section, then, I explore what it was about "life turned inside out'" that made for "learning the right way round" for the students in my study.

After spring break, the Grade 9 language arts students began a medieval theme unit. The unit began with students doing projects/presentations on aspects of medieval life (housing, food, clothing, disease, and so forth.). These were followed by the reading of a novel, *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994), set during medieval times. Essays were then written about the novel. The culminating activity, to take place in early June, would be a 'medieval feast'. In preparation for this event, students had to choose a character, either a historical person (for example, Henry VIII or Joan of Arc) or a generic medieval character (for example, a knight or a jester). Students did research on their character, and then created a costume, which they wore to the feast. For the most part, classroom practices continued as per usual during the reading and writing parts of the unit. However, when the students chose characters and began to design their costumes, I witnessed a transformation. Students who had appeared bored throughout the year and rarely spoken in class were animated and involved—in particular, the boys. This enthusiasm and participation escalated as the day of feasting approached. The following excerpts from my fieldnotes and journal provide a glimpse of the students as they worked on their costumes, and my thoughts as to the dramatic change within the C of P.

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[26] This comment was in relation to Emily's explanation that there was a level of respect for the opposite sex in the class, and no problems with sexual harassment.

Fieldnotes, May 12, 2000

When I got to class today, I was surprised to see how far the students had progressed with their costumes–scraps of cloth and partial costumes were everywhere. Emily got most of the material from the market–she said you can stuff a bag full for $10 and she really stuffs.

Emily was out of the room for quite a while and the girls (except for Adrena and Jamie) were working on their costumes in the sewing room. It was a good opportunity to focus on the boys, and proved to be an incredible day for doing so. Darith is by himself, checking out his costume–it's all laid out on the counter. Then, he tries on the pants. Justin is helping Shu tape his hat together. He tries it on and Justin helps him position it. Roeun and Savuth are talking about what they should cut. Not surprisingly, several of the boys have swords as part of their costumes and they were putting them to good use, in Emily's absence. Sarun gets the stapler from Emily's desk to staple his crown. On the way back from returning it, he begins to play-attack Roeun with his sword. Savuth, to Sarun: "Don't touch me." The three of them end up in the middle of the room, taking part in a mock jousting match. Dith joins them. Sarun to Savuth: "King Henry, you're doomed." "Knight, I smite you", he responds. They're trying on the language–in Bakhtin's terms, "appropriating" words. On the sidelines, Justin, tentatively begins to poke Shu with his sword. Darith is still working quietly on his costume. He really seems to be out of character today–I've never seen him so focused. Emily returns. Tells them: "I need you to clean up. Put everything back in boxes." They keep playing. Emily reiterates: "Ok, boys. Let's quit now and get cleaned up." Sarun tells her: "We're just being our characters." Emily: "That's good, but it's time to clean up now, please." Darith is still working on his costume. Emily: "Boys, Darith. Clean up, now. There's material on the floor. The girls are already cleaned up." To Sarun: "Do that properly, or I'll take it (sword) away."

Journal reflection, May 12, 2000

As I was walking to the bus after class, my head was just about bursting with thoughts of today's class–the level of activity with students interacting, talking, helping each other with their costumes, play acting, using language in imaginative ways... Suddenly, these images were replaced by a picture of the class the first week I spent observing, when there was so little interaction between the students and so few of them were engaged with the lesson of the day. I can't get over the difference in these two scenes.

The feast day itself truly was a 'grand finale' to the school year. I was wearing my pirate costume, hardly appropriate for medieval times, but I told the students that I had always wanted to do time travel and 'crash a medieval party.' When the bell rang, I headed up to the classroom. The door was locked, which was unusual. Lori told me that Emily had decorated the room and wanted it to be a surprise. When Emily arrived and unlocked the door, I could hardly believe it–the classroom looked splendid. Gone were the desks, replaced by long tables, covered with tablecloths, candles, glasses, napkins, and bowls waiting to be filled. Heavy drapes covered the windows, backdrops depicting castle walls had been strategically placed, decorations the students had made were hung about the room. Dith's stocks were located in a prominent position.[27] The morning unfolded in a flurry of excitement: candles were lit, the king was crowned, pictures were taken, students posed in the stocks, boys took part in mock sword fights, girls touched Jamie's spiked hair. We all paraded through the school so that the younger students could see the costumes. And, we feasted–on grape juice 'wine', chicken and buns, strawberries and grapes. The pièce de résistance was the eel pie–tart cups filled with whipped cream and gummy worms!

Surprising things happened. For example, Emily asked Lori and I to take the students out of the class for a group photo, so that she could prepare the eel pie in their absence. The idea was to have the students staggered on the steps so they would fit in the photo. As they were not getting into position easily, Adrena took it upon herself to tell people where to stand (tall ones here, and so forth). She suddenly stopped and said to Savuth: "Well, you're the king and these are your subjects, so you should be getting them in order." I must admit that I was rather flabbergasted when he did as told. He was far less 'directive' than Adrena had been, but he made an effort and his subjects followed suit. It was a wonderful way to 'almost' end the year. I took lots of photos and presented them to the students on my last day in the class. I had not realized at the time how much about the medieval feast I was yet to learn. In some ways, the event was just the beginning.

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[27] The stocks will be explained later in the section.

'Carnival'

Three days after the medieval feast, I checked the university library for the latest issue of *Canadian Modern Language Journal*. I was eagerly awaiting an article forthcoming in this journal co-authored by Kelleen Toohey and two of her graduate students.[28] The journal had arrived–I found the article, *Community of Learners, Carnival, and Participation in a Punjabi Sikh Classroom* (Toohey, Waterstone, & Jule-Lemke, 2000) and read it immediately. Kelleen's articles had always proved enlightening, and this was no exception. At this point in my research, still very concerned about the' cracks' within my research, I was looking for something to miraculously 'fix' my flawed research project. The following is an excerpt from my journal:

Journal reflection, June 5, 2000
As I read the article, I found myself making comparisons to my project, asking myself, "Does this relate? Could this apply?" In the discussion part of the article, the authors refer to Bakhtin's notion of carnival–my reading of Bakhtin to date had focused on other aspects of his work. So, I was surprised to read that "Bakhtin was interested in medieval carnivals, which he saw as offering temporary release from the official social order and a disruption of usual routines." When I saw the word medieval I had a strong reaction; perhaps the best description would be hope tinged with excitement. I was actually hesitant to continue reading for a moment as I was afraid to find out that this idea was not relevant to my project. I did not want to lose that feeling of hope, that this was a possibility that I could pursue within my research. It would be too strong to say I thought I'd found 'the' solution to my dilemma–that carnival could mend my imperfect theoretical framework. But, I just knew the connection to my research project was significant. I couldn't get over the timing–finding the article just days after the medieval feast.

As the reader will know, Bakhtin's *carnival* did not turn out to be the theoretical solution to my flawed project. Nevertheless, it proved enlightening in many ways, brightening parts of my study that had to this point remained in the shadows. Rather, carnival provided me with a way to theorize the medieval feast, a classroom event that struck me as particularly significant (in the way it disrupted classroom practices).[29] Not surprisingly, educational research utilising Bakhtin's notion of carnival has proven particularly informative; this work has provided me with models from which I could begin to explore the connection between carnival and classroom practices.

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[28] By distance, I had been part of a reading group with Kelleen and her students.

For example, Toohey, Waterstone, and Jule-Lemke (2000) use Bakhtin's notion of carnival in their discussion of how social relations in a Punjabi Sikh classroom facilitate or constrain the participation of classroom members. Lensmire (1994, 2000) employs the lessons of Bakhtin's carnival to critically examine the writing workshop, portraying writing workshops as a form of carnival. Young (1998) offers an interpretive analysis of adolescent text-based discussions based on the metaphor, discussion as a practice of carnival. She found Bakhtin's notion of carnival enabled her to look beyond the conventional rules of text-based discussions and allowed her to see how "categories are broken as enthusiastically as rules" (Fiske, 1989, p. 85). And, working with native Spanish-speaking students in a primary grade immersion class, Manyak (2001) considers the construction, maintenance, and consequences of the Daily News as a carnivaleseque literacy practice. Each of these studies in some way inspired my 'rethinking' of the medieval feast. As I had with other aspects of the research, I reexamined the data in light of my new-found knowledge. What was it about the medieval feast (besides the obvious medieval period connection) that made me equate it with Bakhtin's conception of carnival?

> A pageant without a stage and without a division into performers and spectators. In the carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated, it is, strictly speaking, not even played out; its participants live in it, they live according to its laws, as long as those laws are in force, i.e., they live a *carnivalistic life*. The carnivalistic life is life drawn out of its *usual rut,* it is to a degree "life turned inside out," "life the wrong way 'round'" (monde a' l'envers"). (Bakhtin, 1973, pp. 100-101)

Clearly, the feast was an example of classroom "life drawn out of its *usual rut.*" Many community practices were disrupted–some were turned upside down. In Kim's words, "It was fun. It was better than doing work on paper." Would a closer examination reveal more connections? Lensmire (1994, 2000) emphasises four features of Bakhtin's carnival: the participation of all; free and familiar contact among people; a playful, familiar relation to the world; a strong antiofficial discourse–what Bakhtin calls carnival abuse or *profanation,* expressed in blasphemies, obscenities and parodies.[30] Could these features be applied to, as well as inform, my study?

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[29] I am referring as well to the preparations for the medieval feast, not the feast only.

The first feature is the *participation of all* in carnival. Rather than a spectacle performed by some and watched by others, the line between spectator and performer is blurred. This is what struck me first as the students prepared for feast day–how everyone was participating, especially some of the students who were not usually engaged. Emily provided the students with materials and suggested information sources; she was not instructing them. The students were researching their characters, and (to a degree) taking on the personas as they prepared their costumes. When asked about the language arts class during interviews, the enthusiasm for the medieval unit was highlighted: Sarun explained: "It's getting fun 'cause we're doing the medieval unit now and we get to choose a character and dress up like him. We're going to have a big dinner where everybody sits down and eats. That's gonna be cool." Roeun mentioned liking language arts, "especially the medieval part–it's fun. We're going to have something like a dinner at the end...I like the history, the knights and that." Roeun, who was Henry VIII, explained that his costume design was a combination of Henry VIII and a character from a medieval fantasy genre computer game, *Final Fantasy Tactics*. He had done much of the sewing for his costume at home–some of it by hand and some of it by machine; his mom had taught him how to sew. Sarun and Roeun were amongst the boys who were doing poorly academically; their participation in class activities to this point had been minimal.

The second characteristic of carnival is the *free and familiar contact among people*. Physical and social distances between people are suspended and constrained, and people take up and work out, even if only temporarily, new relations with others (Lensmire, 2000). During the making of costumes and the feast day itself, the students were not at their desks doing seatwork. They were actively involved: cutting, sewing, gluing, asking each other for help. Perhaps because classroom life was drawn out of its *usual rut*, I found the distance between myself and the students had shrunk during the preparation for and especially during the feast day itself, as the following journal reflection shows.

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[30] For a more detailed examination of these features, see Lensmire (2000, pp. 9-11) as well as Bakhtin (1973, pp. 122-126).

Journal reflection, June 2, 2000
There was such a different feeling today (not just the class but I mean for me personally). It was the whole atmosphere—the classroom decorated, everyone in costume, doing non-classroom things, behaving out of role. I think it made a difference to me that I had a costume on, too. I found myself talking to kids in an easier way than usual, and kids that I have not interacted with as much—just little snippets like asking Savuth where his crown is or getting Justin to pose for a picture with Shu. I was especially out of character in the staff room. There is something, though, about being in costume, playing a different role.

"Breaking out of boxes" certainly proved to be easier during the medieval feast. For her medieval character, Adrena had chosen to be a knight, which positioned her out of the box– the other girls, save for Jamie, had clearly chosen 'female' roles. Moreover, Adrena did not intend to be a "traditional knight." Curious, I asked about this during the interview:

> Lynne: I wanted to ask you about your costume. You told me that you are a knight, but not a traditional knight.
>
> Adrena: No, I'm doing a toga.
>
> Lynne: Could you tell me what is significant about that?
>
> Adrena: I like going above and beyond, like.
>
> Lynne: So, is this symbolic?
>
> Adrena: This is me. It's totally me. Like, I hate being branded as somebody I'm not. Like, everyone knows the traditional knight is silver. So, recently, I saw a play, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, and one of the knights was in this smokey god-like costume. And, me and Jamie both feel the same, that's why we're totally remodeling. Everybody knows the jester to be the long shirt and the tights, and the funky little bells. We're totally remodeling the jester costume: black tights, wrap around little skirt.

I noticed that Adrena's social position shifted somewhat during this event. Used to feeling like an outcast in the class, especially in relation to the Cambodian boys, the medieval feast raised Adrena's status in their eyes. During the post-carnival interviews, both the girls and the boys commented on how they were impressed with Adrena and Jamie's costumes.

Accompanying the transformed social relations of carnival is the third feature–a *playful, familiar relation to the world.* For Bakhtin, a "free and familiar" attitude spreads over everything, as carnival participants take up new relations with their world. This playful stance is signaled in numerous carnival practices, such as clothes being worn inside out, or underwear as outerwear, countless gestures such as walking backward or standing on your head. I observed various practices that indicated a playful stance–swordplay, wearing of costumes in class. Appropriately, Dith *was* wearing underwear as outerwear–he had borrowed tights from Emily, but he explained: "I couldn't fit the tights, so I just had to wear the underwear to make it look like tights." On feast day, during the parade through the school, the boys were running down the hall, chasing Dith whose underwear was hanging loose and providing great entertainment value for Roeun and Sarun. And, there was plenty of swordplay! In the interview exchange, below, Dith and Roeun speak to one of the many playful moments during feast day.[31]

> Lynne: Did you think people were *different* that day?
> Roeun: Sarun was.
> Dith: Ya, he was really into it.
> Lynne: In what way?
> Dith: In every kind of way.
> Roeun: Ya! (laughs)
> Lynne: Could you give an example?
> Dith: He and Savuth were pulling me in the hallway, he took my underwear thing off me, and kept putting it on his neck and started wearing it.
> Lynne: I saw you guys running down the hall with the underwear hanging down. I tried to get a picture of that, but you were too fast. Anything else?
> Dith: Darith was into his sword. He *really* liked that sword!

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[31] As with certain other topics of interest that surfaced near the end of the school year, the student interviews were completed before the medieval feast (although they were in progress during the preparatory stages). I did have the opportunity to briefly interview two boys (Dith and Roeun) and two girls (Kim and Nouy) following 'feast day.'

These playful moments were, in particular, 'boy moments.' I will return to this point.

The fourth feature of carnival that Lensmire discusses is a strong antiofficial discourse, what Bakhtin calls carnival abuse or *profanation* (expressed in loud blasphemies, obscenities and parodies). Bakhtin emphasises that carnival abuse is not personal invective aimed at other individuals; rather, profanation has as its target the system of practices and ideas that oppress the people. Both negative and positive, profanation is ambivalent. Ambivalence can be seen in one of the most important rituals of the carnival, the mock crowning and decrowning of the king: "In this ritual, a carnival king is crowned, only to fall prey later to carnival abuse in the decrowning, as he is stripped of his regal vestments, crown, and other symbols of authority, and subjected to ridicule and beatings" (Lensmire, 2000, p. 11). It just so happened, the medieval feast incorporated a 'crowning of the king' ritual; however, as we shall see there was no accompanying 'decrowning of the king.'

Who Wants to be King?

Bakhtin thought that the carnivals of the Middle Ages allowed people the "right to emerge from the routine of life, the right to be free from all that is official and consecrated" (p. 257). As can be seen, my initial impression of the medieval feast was positive–I noticed the 'good stuff' first. I became aware of what was *different*–for example, the enthusiasm and engagement of students who were usually detached and bored. Upon closer examination, I realized that while many of the usual routines in the language arts class were disrupted during the medieval feast, not all classroom practices were turned inside out/upside down. Nor could all my observations be regarded in a positive light. Manyak (2001) makes the point that Bakhtin's vision of carnival has been criticized for neglecting the many ways that carnival functioned to reinforce hierarchical community norms and to perpetuate injustices. In his work on writing workshop as carnival, Lensmire (2000) notes that "there is an underside to children's relations that workshop advocates have not confronted. Abuse in carnival (and the writing workshop) is not, as Bakhtin wanted it to be, solely aimed at worthy objects of uncrowning. Some targets are chosen because they are easy targets, because already uncrowned, never crowned" (p. 26). Following Lensmire, Toohey, Waterstone, and Jule-Lemke (2000) are careful to not assume that carnival moments among peers necessarily generate full participation and maximize learning opportunities for all–"such moments may in fact reinforce existing social hierarchies among peers, who may lack the wisdom of a sensitive adult" (p. 433).

What I noticed in my study was that while the medieval feast generated increased participation of students, at the same time, it tended to reinforce social hierarchies among students. Much about the 'medieval feast' appeared to further entrench the established gender relations, and to a lesser extent, the ethnic divisions, in the class. Adrena's description of the class seemed especially apt during the medieval feast unit: "Actually, everyone has their own little circle. There's the guys. And then there's the girls. Then there's me and Jamie." The class described earlier when the students were making their costumes provides an example. Lori had taken the Asian girls to the home economics room to sew their costumes because they wanted them to look "professional." Jamie and Adrena stayed behind to work on their costumes; they were striving for the unconventional look. As I watched the boys, I noticed how well integrated they were, and how many exchanges with different members occurred over the course of the class. While ethnic boundaries were weakened for boys during carnival, separations between the girls became more pronounced.[32] Moreover, this carnivalesque event seemed to accentuate the way in which, over the course of the year, the boys appeared to take 'center stage' in the class social hierarchy.

The event in which the boys took centre stage more than any other was the 'Who wants to be king?' contest. As part of the pre-feast preparations, a competition to determine who would be king took place; on the day of the feast, the king would be crowned and receive especial treatment. On the day of the competition, Emily explained: "On feast day, the king will get to sit in the head chair at the front of the class. You will be treated awesomely. You will be king of everyone, except me. Who wants to be king? Whose character is a king?"[33] Six boys entered the competition: Roeun, Justin,

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[32] One exception to this was Dylan; his attendance was so poor that he did not manage to get a costume made, and he did not come to school on the day the feast was held.

[33] To enter the contest, students had to have chosen characters who were kings (for example, Henry III or Henry VIII).

Savuth, Dith, Sarun, and Hông. The competition took place over two class periods and included a combination of intellectual and physical challenges; the contest was also part skill and part chance. The intellectual challenges included spelling and a math cube puzzle. The physical challenges included running up and down the stairs till you drop, Indian leg wrestling, push ups till you drop, skipping till you stop, shuttle run, weight lifting, longest run, and sit ups. As a bonus activity, the boys had to run on a log without falling, and then shake each other off the log without physical contact. Because of the chance element of the contest, not all of these events were completed. Perhaps not surprisingly, the physical challenges drew the most attention (in particular, the running of the stairs and the weight lifting). Savuth ended up winning the contest, and was crowned king on the feast day.

I found the event entertaining, and it was fascinating to see some of the boys in a different context. For example, Savuth, who won the contest, while very much one of the 'Cambodian guys', kept a low profile in class. Emily's joking style was especially evident during the contest, as can be seen in the following excerpt about the running of the stairs.

Fieldnotes, May 31, 2000
A bit later Sarun straggles (and I mean straggles!) up the stairs and stops, so he's out of this part of the contest. Emily says to him: "Don't puke on the stairs or it will be slippery." This is so typical of her joking manner with the students, particularly the boys, and Sarun more so than with the others.

However, another part of me was concerned as to how the girls were excluded in this event. The rest of us watched the boys compete–in this activity, unlike carnival, the line between participants and spectators was *not* blurred.[34] I suspected, though, that at least some of the girls would like to have been more than spectators. After class on the second day of the contest, most of the students, as well as Emily, hurried out of the classroom to get to their next class. Two of the girls–Nouy and Kim–lingered behind so that they could try out the weights the boys had been lifting. I joined them. Kim picked up the weight and tried it, saying, "I can't believe they did this 30 times." Then Nouy tried it. Jamie and Adrena, who by this time had returned to the class, followed suit. In the interview exchange with Kim and Nouy, below, my suspicions are confirmed:

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[34] The boys who had not entered the contest were also spectators.

> Lynne: So, what did you think of the 'Who wants to be king?' contest?
>
> Nouy: It was pretty fun, entertaining.
>
> Lynne: What about you, Kim?
>
> Kim: It was entertaining, seeing the guys run up the stairs, and pushing each other off that log.
>
> Lynne: I was wondering why there wasn't a 'Who wants to be queen?' contest.
>
> Kim: There are no queens–we're all princesses. (laughs)
>
> Nouy: Ya, I asked Mrs. Carstairs but I don't think she realized there should be a contest for, like, girls. I wanted to try some of those activities.
>
> Lynne: What did you want to try?
>
> Nouy: The arm weights.
>
> Lynne: What about you, Kim?
>
> Kim: I wanted to try the stairs. I wanted to see how much I could do.
>
> Lynne: It was fun watching the guys, but I wondered why there wasn't something for the girls.
>
> Kim: There should be queen only. I mean, the girls had to sit and watch, missed out on the fun.
>
> Nouy: I think there should have been both.
>
> Lynne: Well, the guys did seem to get more 'center stage.' How did that feel?
>
> Kim: Ok, I'm used to it. It happens all the time.
>
> Lynne: Could you give me an example?
>
> Kim: Ok, like in sports. (little laugh)
>
> Lynne: Would you prefer PE that's just for girls, then?
>
> Nouy: Just girls is not fun.
>
> Kim: Ya, the girls are like (laughs) afraid they might break their nails or get hurt.
>
> Lynne: I know what you mean there...(and it sounds like I do).

This exchange makes it clear that (at least some of) the girls would like to have been a participant in this event; at the same time, Kim emphasizes that this situation was not out of the ordinary ("I'm used to it"). For Bakhtin, the mock crowning and decrowning of the king epitomizes "the lesson taught in carnival: things change" (Lensmire, 2000, p. 11). Regarding this aspect of my study, though, I wondered if a more apt characterization might be "the more they changed, the more they stayed the same." The 'king' of the Grade 9 language arts class was neither humiliated nor toppled. Savuth retained his crown; the boys remained on top of the social hierarchy. As they had done with the groupwork, entrenched gender practices influenced this event as well. The girls played their part in these circumstances. They were used to the boys taking 'center stage', for example, in sports. Yet, they were reluctant to challenge the status quo. The two boys I interviewed following the feast day sensed something to this effect. When I brought up the absence of a 'Who wants to be queen?' contest, Roeun's opinion was "Well, the girls wouldn't try something like that." Whereas Dith thought that "Mrs. Carstairs probably just decided to have the guys compete, 'cause the guys really enjoyed it." Why didn't he think the girls would have enjoyed the contest? "'Cause the costumes, they didn't like making them so much. They weren't laughing and giggling at each other or anything. They were just like quiet, sitting down." In contrast, Roeun told me that the guys were "running around, fighting with the swords, wearing our costumes." Interestingly, though, Adrena and Jamie were not included in this description. Dith explained: "I noticed Jamie and Adrena. They were at least trying to do something, have fun, dress up. Their costumes were cool. They were, like, trying to be a jester and a knight." On the surface, Roeun and Dith's version seemed like a fairly apt description. I had had similar thoughts myself:

Fieldnotes, June 2, 2000

At one point when they were all around the table eating, I said to Emily that this medieval feast (and leading up to it) was a good example of the gender stuff that has been going on in this class. She agreed, using the word depiction. The guys' costumes certainly were more vibrant (with the exception of Adrena and Jamie) than the girls. A strange image, in some ways seemingly a fitting comparison, appeared in my head–how, with birds, the males of the species are more colourful and decorative. Emily made the comment that the girls' costumes were good, but plain, not because they had not put in the effort that the boys had but because of the kind of characters they were. Follow this up in interview with Emily.

It is incorrect to suggest that the Asian girls did not delight in the costume making; they had a very different way of expressing their enjoyment, though. In the carnivalesque environment, boxes were turned upside down; while many students found that this made it easier to break out of them, not everyone chose to do so. Why did the opportunity to disrupt community practices appear to be greater for the guys, and for "Adrena and Jamie", than for the Asian girls? The strong cultural expectations present in the lives of the Asian girls was likely a significant factor.

I wondered as to Emily's thoughts on the subject. When I first heard about the contest, I had asked her if any of the girls were involved. She had said no, but that they were welcome to enter the contest. Apparently last year one girl had entered, and placed second. As time constraints in class had not allowed for more than this brief explanation, I reintroduced the topic during our interview:

> Lynne: ....back to the 'Who wants to be king?' contest. I started to ask you about this in class. What about a queen to go along with the king?
>
> Emily: Oh, well, in medieval times the queen just didn't really have a role. I mean, she was on the arm of her husband. And, the Grade 8's were coming up, and asking about that, too. "What about the queen contest, or something like that?" So, that's what I say. But, I also say to them, "You're a girl, but you can be a king, you know. Like last year, there was one who competed to be king, so you're free to do that. That's more than acceptable."
>
> Lynne: It was interesting because in some ways it fit with the way these guys and girls seem to be.
>
> Emily: Yeah, five centuries later.

Remodeling

What was the teacher's role in the way gender relations were enacted in this event? It seemed that the way the event had been structured enabled certain things to happen, and constrained others from happening. While Emily had invited the girls to participate in the contest, I think the *expectation* was that they would be spectators. In that setting, it was too difficult for the girls to step into such a clearly male-defined role. The girls may not have wanted a 'Who wants to be queen?' contest; I think it is reasonable to say that they would like to have had a more active role as participants, though. Although unintended, Emily set the terms of 'carnival' in ways that supported the established gender order in the C of P, positioning boys in the limelight and at the same time limiting the participation of girls. Rather than conform to a 'realistic' interpretation of medieval life, would it have been possible to 'reinterpret', or in Adrena's words, *remodel* the times to create an event in which participation and opportunities for learning were maximized?

When I looked more closely, I realized that possibilities were close at hand. While women in the middle ages did not have many of the freedoms, rights, and opportunities that women of today do (at least in our part of the world), neither were they always "on the arms of their husbands." I looked up 'women in the middle ages' on the internet, and found a wealth of information about the medieval period that could yield prominent females. For example, I found a report, *Brave Women in the Middle Ages*, written by a Grade 8 student. The introduction to the report reads: "Even though women weren't treated fairly during the Middle Ages, some women did manage to become famous. Jeanne de Clisson is one of those women." To my surprise, two of the four women included in the report were women the students had chosen for their characters.[35] Nouy was Jeanne de Clisson and Kim was Isabella of England. Neary, another Asian girl in the class, was Joan of Arc. And, we all know Joan of Arc did not spend her time on the arm of a husband![36] The novel the students read in class, *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994), provided another opportunity to consider ways in which even girls in the middle ages could resist gendered expectations. Due to the 'like pulling teeth' issue, class discussion of the text had been minimal, though. *Catherine, Called Birdy*, however, had Adrena thinking about parallels between life in medieval times and society today:

> I think it's really weird, like, just looking back at the medieval times. But, it reminds me so much of the way things are now, like, just the separate class groups. They had the kings, the queens, the nobles, the servants, the peasants. I'm starting to think society's like that now. Like, if you're a woman you don't get ahead, you don't get the best jobs, you don't get the best pay. Like, a lot of stuff is segregated–it's the guys, the girls, the men, the women.

'Learning the right way round'

I was excited by the connections made between Bakhtin's carnival and my research data, as well as the possibilities offered by conceptualizing the medieval unit in this way. I have made suggestions as to how hierarchical community norms could perhaps be disrupted rather than reinforced. I am aware, however, that I am doing so from a position of advantage. I am writing this in retrospect, from the vantage point of an observer, with the benefit of having read and reflected on the 'carnival' literature. I wondered how I would have conceptualized the medieval feast had I not come across Toohey et al.'s 'carnival' article. It is not as though the article made the event significant; rather, 'carnival' provided me with a new way to theorize the medieval feast unit. Two possibilities had already been taking shape in my mind–hands-on-learning and drama.

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[35] Emily had supplied the names of the characters for the students to choose from.

[36] Mary II and William III provide another example for students to explore.

What was it about the medieval feast unit that so engaged students, in particular students hitherto disengaged (for example, Dith and Sarun)? Noticing how *different* they seemed in this context called to mind McDermott's (1993) study of Adam, a nine-year old 'learning disabled' boy. McDermott explains that, because they were interested in the social organization of learning, they followed the children in Adam's class across a number of settings. They were often struck with how much some children varied across the different settings, none more so than Adam: "Our question about how to describe Adam turned into a question about how to describe the settings in which the different Adams could emerge (McDermott, 1993, p. 279). What was it about the *carnival* setting that allowed me to see a 'different' Dith? For Dith and several other students, the 'hands-on' or applied learning component of the unit seemed especially significant, as illustrated the following fieldnote excerpts.[37]

Fieldnotes, May 12, 2000

I found myself watching Dith in class today. He was so engaged in making his costume and doing such a great job—I haven't seen him participate like this all year. I remember what he said during the interview about liking projects, hands-on stuff and how keen he was on the medieval unit. But his essay, about the novel Catherine Birdy, was really poor. I'm sure seeing a 'different' Dith in this context!

Fieldnotes, May 15, 2000

Emily announced that it was the last day to work on their costumes as the next day they will be going on to letter writing (which will be on their test next week). The students have their costumes/materials on desk ready to go—Dith is laughing, holding up his 'costume so far' for others to see. Emily says, "I wish you'd put as much effort into your essay writing as you are into your costumes."

Fieldnotes, June 1, 2000

After announcements and before the 'Who wants to be king?' contest continued, Emily goes to front of room and shows the class this wooden structure called 'stocks'–a medieval torture device. She gives a demonstration as to how it works and Jamie asks if they are really going to go in it. "If you make me mad" was Emily response. Emily

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[37] See Voss (1996) for a similar and fascinating example.

mentioned that Dith had helped to make it, so when I got a chance, later, I asked him about it. He told me he made it in shop class (with the teacher's help) especially for the medieval feast. At the end of class, Emily joked that one of the tasks in the contest should have been to see how long they could last in the stocks.

Fieldnotes, June 2, 2000
Dith's stocks were a hit at the medieval feast today. Lots of the students asked me to take their pictures as they posed in the stocks. I took a couple of Dith–one with Savuth pretending to cut his head off with his sword on one side, and Sarun doing the same on the other (and a huge smile on his face, nonetheless).

Through the medieval feast, I was able to see Dith in a different light and to get a better understanding of what 'learning the right way round' meant for him. For this to happen in the language arts class, established practices had been disrupted–turned upside down (if you will). This was how Emily regularly organized instructional discourse in the science class, though. For Emily, teaching the medieval unit was more like teaching science:

> In science we do a lot of hands-on stuff, but in language arts I really like doing things like the medieval stuff. I find that more enjoyable, you know. It would be nice to teach the essay format if they got it right away. But, there's always the clump of them as opposed to a select few who actually learn how to do it, so that's just more frustrating for me.

I recalled her comment early in my research project, that science was more fun to teach than language arts. "I like the subject, but it's not as interactive, as hands on. It's not as easy to sit down and ask a kid what they did on the weekend when they are reading." At the time, I really did not understand. Through the medieval unit, I began to 'get it,' as the following journal reflection shows:

Journal reflection, July 4, 2000
It's taken me long enough, but I think I'm beginning to understand why Emily enjoys teaching science more. During the interviews, a lot of the students have mentioned how much they like the hands-on projects–in particular, the guys like Sarun and Dith who are doing so poorly in language arts. I remember when Dith told me that he'll be taking the apprenticeship program in high school because "I'm always one of the students that can't learn quickly." Seeing Dith shine like this, I wonder as to the implications for learning. Sure, they like playing around with swords, but I know there's more to say about their engagement than "boys will be boys." And, you can't just write off their non-engagement the rest of the year with a "boys will be boys" explanation, either.

I also thought about Emily's remarks about the state of the science lab: "So, that's frustrating because I think about how they would learn it better as opposed to reading it in the textbook, which is what they have to do, and listening to me talk." With the medieval unit, Emily had created a setting in which these students could "learn it better." With the research the students had done, first about aspects of medieval life and then in relation to their characters, this promising learning milieu had extended into the areas of reading and writing. The challenge was how to further extend these conditions.[38]

Drama proved to be an additional factor in what made it possible for the students to be appropriated into the medieval unit relatively easily, when attracting them to so many other activities was "like pulling teeth." Many of the students were also clearly drawn to the theatrical component of the medieval unit. Conveniently, the costume preparation coincided with the arrival of Lori, the student teacher from Toronto. Noticing how keen the students were, Lori planned to teach a mini drama unit, as a way of capitalizing on their interest. Emily expressed her reservations to me: "Lori's going to find out it is like pulling teeth to get the students to participate." In the interview exchange, below, we see otherwise:

> Lynne: You mentioned that you may have the students develop their medieval characters through some drama work.
>
> Lori: I'm going to let them use their character to get into a role, and play the role a little bit. I think just in general kids like the word drama, at least it sounds like it's fun to them. And, they definitely love the medieval unit, especially making the costumes and being a character. Some of the kids have been wearing their costumes around all day.[39]
>
> Lynne: One of the things I've noticed is how some of the kids who don't usually participate in class too much, are really keen on this unit.
>
> Lori: That's true. But, I found it funny that they actually enjoy doing it 'cause I thought they might be embarrassed to dress up, you know, like idiots, but they loved it, and they're walking around all day in their costumes, so...
>
> Lynne: Yeah, and that's the thing, you never know till you try something.

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[38] Although several of the students (in particular the boys) had done poorly on the essay about the novel, *Catherine, Called Birdy,* through observations and conversations with these same students, it was clear that they had learned much about life in medieval times.
[39] This was two weeks before feast day.

Lori had tried–and succeeded, despite Emily's prediction. She managed to disrupt community discourse practices through the introduction of drama; while not necessarily a 'piece of cake', getting the students to participate in drama had not been 'like pulling teeth.'

> Well, there's always some that are more open to it than others, and it's not the ones that like talking, that's what I find. The ones that are usually always talking when they're not supposed to be talking–you know, the ones who relish in any opportunity for attention, they're not the ones who are going after being on centre stage. It's the ones that are kind of quiet, that you never would have guessed they would like something like that. They're coming out of their shell more.

I found this exciting. I knew what she meant. I had experienced this with some of the students in the interviews, students who never sought centre stage, but had been very forthcoming in the interviews–Hông, Kim, and Dith, for example. Playing at being somebody else had an appeal, as can be seen in Dith's comment:

> Like we wore our costumes quite a bit, during class, and when we weren't supposed to. We wore pieces of it and just walked into class. I enjoy that, you know, being someone else.

This suggested that there was yet something else about the carnival setting that allowed parts of students yet unseen to emerge and shine. Perhaps it was easier for Lori, as a newcomer with no preconceived ideas about the students, to attempt drama. She also entered the C of P at a time when community practices had already been disrupted to a degree–through group work, other newcomers and the medieval unit. The class Lori was coming to know was different than the one I had first encountered in the fall. Yet another example of Eckert's (2000) point that, in a community of practice, "both individual and group identities are in continual construction, continual change, continual refinement" (pp. 42-43).

As I approach the end of the dissertation, I am aware that I do not have all the answers to the questions I have raised in this, and other, parts of the dissertation. I hope here to have provided here at least a partial answer to my query: If carnivalistic life is "life turned inside out," "life the wrong way round", what for these students made it *learning the right way round?* I hear Emily's voice early in the project telling me: "I can't seem to motivate them, no matter how hard I try." Looking over my fieldnotes and interview transcripts, I want to tell her: "Well, they are motivated now." I could appreciate Nystrand's (1997, p. 9) point that "what counts is how teachers organize instruction" in a new light.

Emily had discovered a way to make language arts not only more 'fun' to teach, but had also opened up new learning opportunities for her students. Both the drama and the practical activity elements of the medieval unit contributed to the carnivalesque social space created within the class. The disruption of certain community practices during this carnivalesque event led to changed behaviour. Many of the descriptions of the student participants offered earlier in the research project–by me, by teachers, by students–were no longer accurate. Students for whom talk was 'like pulling teeth' were participating in drama activities, boys who had seldom completed an assignment were reluctant to have class end, newcomers who had felt excluded had found their niche. We had come to expect seemingly ingrained behaviours from these students. Rather, as educators we need to explore ways to help situate learners outside predictable practices so that they may be drawn beyond their *usual ruts*. Despite the flaws, like Manyak (2001), I believe that carnival "provides educators the substance for imagining and fostering new and vibrant classroom practices" (p. 433).

Certainly, it was important to keep in mind that carnival had a prescribed number of days, whereas September–June is a long time. The medieval feast I described was a culminating event to a unit, and it took place at the end of the year. If things were 'turned upside down', well, it did not much matter–school was soon out. Certainly, the boys challenged the established order in their 'playfulness'–running around the hallways dressed in underwear and brandishing swords would likely produce chastisement if not punishment in other school contexts. No, this type of activity could not be sustained year round. Yes, essay writing was still important. But, I am convinced that this was more than an end-of-the-year party–there were lessons to be learned. Through this unit, I had come to *see* what Dith meant when he told me that he "learned better" by means of hands-on learning; clearly, the RAP program in which he would learn a trade appeared to be a good choice for this boy.[40] However, because Dith intended to learn a trade did not mean that he had no need for reading and writing skills. Was there a clue here as to how Dith could be acquired into a higher level of academic discourse? Could this experience be utilized to envision a way to make writing, for example, more appealing? I found a possible answer in Goldstein's (2002) paper which "discusses the possibilities of working with high school students as researchers of culture and language in their own school communities" (p. 53). It features a short ethnographic play which dramatizes the difficulty of preparing an oral presentation in a second language. Given what I learned through the medieval feast, the implications of Goldstein's research for the students in my study are numerous.

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[40] See Chapter 4 for a description of the RAP program.

All of this suggests that carnival needs, just like every other aspect of teaching, teachers cognizant of the 'incidental' learning that occurs with their teaching. Similarly, in their research, Toohey Waterstone, and Jule-Lemke (2000) suggest that, for enabling carnival in classrooms, a particular kind of adult engagement is needed. They recognize

> the significance of a 'performer' who understands moments of carnival in the classroom and how important such moments are in creating opportunities for participation, and thus development and learning, in classroom activities. (Toohey, Waterstone, & Jule-Lemke, p. 433)

Who, I wondered, could serve this function in my research site? For a while the glow from my enthusiasm was dimmed. I wondered what my excitement about the way in which Bakhtin's carnival illuminated the medieval feast meant if the teacher was not similarly informed. I came to realize, though, that in order to let the light in, it is necessary to have new ideas. Bakhtin's 'carnival' had provided me with new ideas, enabling me to take my understanding of the medieval feast further. While it was too late for the research participants, my hope is that carnivaleseque moments in classroom practices will increase in frequency and teachers will become more cognizant of their roles as performers in these moments.

'Come a Long Way' (The Ultimate Disruption)

> I contend that it is neither an individual moving through identifiable stages of development in a linear, predictable fashion, nor an individual welcomed into a harmonious community that prompts learning. Rather, it is within the complex weave of social relations that students learn....As children sever old ties and make new connections, turning away from childhood's roles towards adult identities, the teaching and learning of

> appropriate literate behaviors play an important role in this complex social negotiation. (Finders, 1997, p. 117)

In this chapter I have discussed some of the disruptions to established practices that occurred during the second half of the research project: group work, newcomers, carnival. As the end of the school year approached, I began to think about students' imminent departure for high school as the ultimate disruption of the community of practice. Although the C of P under study had been the Grade 9 language arts class, many of student participants had been members of the school C of P for years; several had been classmates since kindergarten. Some students, for instance Adrena, could hardly wait for high school. Others, such as Dith and Hông, were afraid, wishing they could *go back in time*. One of the themes in this dissertation has been that of preparing students for high school. The reader will know that some doubts had been expressed as to whether the students were well prepared, socially as well as academically. However, data suggest that some promising changes had been noted as the school year came to a close. For example, I mentioned earlier in the chapter that the students appeared to be more comfortable with group work. Other changes came to light in the interviews. The following excerpt is Emily's response to the question, "How would you describe the Grade 9 class as a group?"

> I think as a group they've come a long way, they've matured a lot over the year. As individuals some haven't, but as a group I think they have–just the dynamics of the class. And these guys, you look at them and go, "Okay, we might have some hope that you're not going be goofy for the rest of your life. You guys have come a long way, you know." So, we'll see. They've been a good group to work with, not even the academics, just macho men.

Emily's comment highlights the importance of focusing on the C of P, rather than on individuals. It also draws attention to the boys–many of the doubts over students' preparedness had been raised in particular about the boys. Darren's comments about change were also directed towards the boys.

> The guys have gone through a really amazing change since Easter. I think one of the biggest things that changed them is the fact that some of them went and got a part time job, and I think it opened their eyes up. It was cool for about two weeks and also put some money in their pocket. And then, "Gee, I don't want to be frying fries, and washing dishes." To be

> honest, I wish I could say it was me, but I think the A&W experience made an impression. It was one of the most important things they've learned this year–just going there and seeing what that kind of life is like. They realized that they don't want to flip burgers for the rest of their lives.

For me, this emphasises the reality that sometimes no matter what we do (for example, Emily's "talk and talk and talk about what next year's going to be like"), it is often something beyond our control that will be successful in making the point that we, as teachers, have been long trying to get across. In this case, a minimum wage job at A&W. This brought to mind Lave and Wenger's point "that learning through legitimate peripheral participation takes place no matter which educational form provides a context for learning, or whether there is any intentional educational form at all" (p 40). This is not to say that there was no connection between what had happened for the boys at A&W and what the Grade 9 teachers were trying to accomplish. For some, it had proved the catalyst in enabling them to understand that the decisions they were making now would play a role in determining their future prospects. For example, Darren went on to say: "Soon after that a lot of them seemed to be much more interested in the high school programming. I've got four boys that are registered for the RAP program–it's a beautiful way to go to school." The reader will remember that Dith was excited about his decision to enter the RAP program.

And, although Darren downplays his influence, Emily's opinion was that the changes "actually have a lot to do with Darren more than anything. He's got a good relationship with them, and he works really hard at developing that." For the Grade 9 students, a significant part of this had been in relation to making preparations for high school. Without exception, every student I interviewed spoke about how helpful Mr. Williams had been in helping them decide which high school to attend and what courses to take. Darren wanted to ensure the students knew what their options for high school were and how to proceed.

> I've brought in guest speakers to talk to them, representatives from the different high schools, as well as high school students. I've shown books and what the high school courses look like, and some of them have gone, "oohh!!" I went to the schools myself and personally registered all of them. I've really hounded them–that might sound mean, but at this age level some of them need hounding. I don't go home thinking, "How can I

> make their life miserable?" I go home thinking, "How can I help them to make their life better? Or at least give them a shot at it, and choices."

I have shown that much of what students learn in school is not what teachers are teaching. I have also made the point that many of the factors that influence students' chances for success are beyond teachers' control. At the same time, this work has emphasised for me that teachers *can* and *do* make a difference. As a teacher, I learned to never underestimate my students. As a researcher, I have learned to never underestimate the role of the teacher. How would Darren describe the Grade 9 class?

> As a group? Well, they're my kids. I've had them now two years; each and every one of them is the most important thing to me. With them graduating this year, they mean a lot to me. I want nothing but the best for them, and when they don't give it to me I give it to them. When they leave here, I don't want them to feel that no one cared, and that no one wanted the best for them. I really try and push them. I want them ready for high school.

I cannot say that all the students were 'ready' for high school; however, I can say that none of them left Coalfield School feeling that no one cared.

CHAPTER 6
RINGING THE BELLS: ACCEPT MY IMPERFECT OFFERING

> There are two entries into communication–the one by which one depersonalizes one's visions and insights, formulates them in the terms of the common rational discourse, and speaks as a representative, a spokesperson, equivalent and interchangeable with others, of what has to be said. The other entry into communication is that in which you find it is you, you saying something, that is essential. (Lingis, 1994, p. 116)

Introduction

I let go of my unrealistic vision of the perfect research project long ago. I actually found myself embracing imperfection. I looked for and discovered light in the cracks. I learned an incredible amount. I raised more questions than I answered. I debated the 'politics of representation.'

> Events in the world are ambiguous. We struggle to understand these events, to imbue them with meaning. The choice of a particular way of representing events gives them a particular meaning. There is often a competition over the correct, appropriate or preferred way of representing objects, events or people. Competition over the meaning of ambiguous events, people and objects in the world has been called the 'politics of representation.' (Mehan, 1993, p. 241)

Although I incorporate the voices of the research participants in this dissertation, I made the decisions as to how they would be represented. In this sense, then, I speak as a representative. However, I hope that my voice is not interchangeable with others. My desire is that it is me, me saying something, that is essential.

'Living with the Cracks' (Methodological Offering)

> Do my curriculum theorizings and my perspectives on what curriculum is and should be as a field of study have any relation to the daily political, personal, social, and cultural dynamics, situations, and pressures upon these teachers? Does what constitutes research as well as curriculum theorizing and construction as a living practice vary in both form and substance for classroom and university teachers? And how might I attend, as a university researcher and teacher, to those differences in ways that do not replicate the very unequal power relations against which I write and research? (Miller, 1997, p. 206)

Like Miller (1997), I had many questions about my research with a classroom teacher. I was torn between my responsibility to represent what I learned and my desire to be fair to the teacher. Although many aspects of my study were not directly related to the teacher's practice, other parts of the study (for example, the 'like pulling teeth' issue) necessitated framing the teacher's practice in what could be considered a negative light. My intention was to make sense of what had gone on in the research site; my fear is that I will be seen as criticizing the teacher. Although in this work I am positioned as a researcher, I remember well what it is like to be a classroom teacher. I cannot count the times, since becoming a graduate student, that I have examined my teaching practice in retrospect. Recitation sequences provide one of many examples. At the time, I prided myself on having what I thought were productive verbal exchanges with my students; I now shudder to think what a researcher would have had to say about my instructional discourse practices.

In their article, *Recitation as hegemonic discourse*, Gutierrez and Larson (1994) claim that hegemonic classroom practices deny language minority children the opportunity to appropriate the cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural knowledge that is needed for academic success. They note that hegemonic contexts for learning also have consequences for teachers: "It is important to recognize that teachers too have been socialized through their own lived experiences as students in classrooms where these were the normative practices" (p. 33). The irony is that, as a rule, teachers do not learn about matters such as the ways in which recitation is a form of hegemonic discourse unless they become graduate students. Teachers generally have neither access to nor time for this kind of knowledge. Yet, as researchers, we sometimes expect otherwise. Toohey (2000) acknowledges that "finding ways to have respectful, productive and sometimes conflictual conversations with teachers about classroom practice in these circumstances is difficult; teachers as well as researchers must enter willingly into such conversations" (p. 133).[1] As "it is only in such discourse that teachers and researchers will affect one another's practice," time to talk needs to be structured into research designs. Teachers are extremely busy people; Emily and I never had enough time to discuss matters related to the research.

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[1] By 'these circumstances' Toohey (2000) is referring to the ways in which teachers and researchers are differently positioned.

The implications of these points take me back to my methodology chapter where I noted that my preference was to conduct research that was more collaborative in nature, with a teacher who shared a common research interest. This is the one crack in my study that I have found difficult to accept. Wells (1999) outlines what he considers to be the two major traditions of educational research: observational studies, usually large scale, carried out by visiting instructors, who spend little time in individual classrooms and intervention studies, more oriented to bringing about change. He criticizes both, the first because what is observed is interpreted almost entirely from the researcher's perspective and because the emphasis is on describing the way things are (findings take on a normative status), and the second because the studies are not grounded in the specific cultural and historical context of the classrooms involved and they do not have the active participation of the individual teachers concerned regarding the changes to be made.

My research, an ethnographic case study, is neither. In one important way, though, my study was similar to the first type. While my research project was certainly not large scale, and I did spend a fair bit of time in a particular classroom, the emphasis of my research was to describe the way things are. Change, however, was what I was interested in. Wells (1999) suggests that, to bring about change, educational research needs to be collaborative, involving classroom participants as well as university researchers in situated inquiries that start from current practice. Furthermore, the research design should allow space for new ways of learning and teaching to emerge as teachers explore what they and their students might be able to achieve. This describes what I wanted for my research. Gutierrez and Larson (1994) propose similar recommendations. They make the point that traditional research paradigms may contribute to the

> devaluation of teachers when teachers become the objects of research rather than co-participants and co-constructors of the research agenda. Action-oriented, ethnographic research in school attempts to improve these practices by assisting teachers to become classroom researchers and critical practitioners and by providing a more situated understanding of the teaching and learning practices in classrooms. Transforming classroom instruction requires that teachers also be given full membership in the community of practice. (p. 34)

The authors speak to what was missing from my research project and why it has caused me such discomfort. Given my theoretical framework, the reference to communities of practice is especially apt. It is perhaps ironic that while I studied Emily as a member of a community of practice, she was not given membership in the sense meant by Gutierrez and Larson. While I can make recommendations for future practice, to have effected change in classroom instruction, Emily would have to have been a "co-participant and co-constructor of the research agenda."

I am not suggesting that there is no need for the first two types of studies Wells mentions. Rather, this project has emphasized for me that the researcher needs to be comfortable with the type of research undertaken. With both my master's and doctoral studies, I found myself in the uncomfortable position of 'needing' a research site. While I believe that what I studied was of importance to the educational community in general and the schools where I conducted my research in particular, there was no *direct* benefit for the teacher and students. I wanted my research project to yield more than a dissertation–my desire was that my participants would benefit as well. In this regard, I am drawn to Goldstein's (2002) article. Goldstein offered a critical ethnographic playwriting workshop for students who had completed a Grade 12 English class. Having spent the previous year as an ethnographic researcher in the Grade 12 classroom, she wanted to give something back to the student participants. Goldstein explains that she and her research team joined a community of ethnographers looking for innovative ways to negotiate the politics of researching 'Other people's children'.[2] She discusses how "having students create and perform their own ethnographic texts is 'useful' to them (Smith, 1999) and thus assists language researchers in negotiating the politics of researching Other people's children" (p. 52).

> Educational ethnographers work within a legacy of racism and colonialism that makes our research suspect. It is important that we look for ways to represent the experiences of our research participants in ways that do not reproduce policies and practices of colonialism and racism we have inherited. One way of working toward representations that facilitate

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[2] The phrase 'Other people's children' was coined by Lisa Delpit (1995). Goldstein explains that she capitalizes the word 'Other' to indicate that she is using the word to mean people who are not part of the dominant racial and linguistic community and who have been racialized by white English-speaking researchers.

> (rather than appropriate) Other people's truths is to have them represent themselves. (p. 54)

Goldstein's playwriting workshop provides an example of the type of project that could have proven advantageous for my research participants.[3] Something comparable is one of my goals for future research.

Goldstein also mentions that she and her research team joined a growing community of ethnographers who seek to break the traditional boundaries that separate research, teaching and learning (e.g. Bloom, 1998; Stringer et al., 1997). While I was eager to break the boundaries between teaching and research, at the same time I knew that there was another side to the research process that I needed to consider. As the reader will know, I struggled at times throughout the research to keep my teacher self and my researcher self separate. Toohey (2000) notes that while she no longer teaches children, she is a legitimate peripheral participant in a community of teachers. However, she made a conscious decision to distance herself from that community in her research: "I wished to disrupt my usual affiliation so that I might primarily observe children, and not participate in a teacher discourse community about those children" (p. 131).

There is a lesson for me here, all the more important because my teacher identity is dominant. Although I began the research knowing that I needed to be aware of biases and assumptions, they still interfered. Like an anthropologist trying to describe her own culture, it was hard for me not to be 'blind' or unaware of some of what went on within the classroom. At times, I found it difficult to extract myself from the 'taken for granted' nature of schooling. Despite these lapses, by retaining primarily a researcher stance I had learned much that I may not have learned otherwise. I realized that while research to bring about change was what I had wanted to do, research to describe *the way things are* was likely what I *needed* to do. In order to effect change, one must first understand the way things are. By having done my doctoral research, I am now better positioned to do the kind of research that I can more easily live with. Without this apprenticeship, I am unsure if I would have been sufficiently prepared. What I learned and have to offer in this regard will be the focus of the next section.

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[3] I acknowledge various constraints I faced as a graduate student: time, financial and lack of expertise.

'Blinded by the Light' (Theoretical Offering)

you'd think it would be easier than it is–
given the obvious differences between the darkness and the light
i could slip into the shadows but i find they're either too loose or too tight
i may slip into them still–i'm not saying i will, i'm just saying I might

- from *So Close To My Knees,* Laura Smith (b'tween the earth and my soul)

It has not been easy–finding and following a theoretical framework proved to be challenging. I was drawn towards the light that theory offered. On occasion, though, the light blinded me. I came to fully understand that while "the value of theory is that it allows one to see the previously invisible and to see the previously visible in new ways, the danger of theory is that it can function like a set of blinders, restricting what one sees and how one sees it" (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 26). Often, the fit between what I was noticing in my research and what I was reading in the literature was not close–either too loose or too tight. I tried to make my study fit the theory, rather than have the theory illuminate my study. The differences between the darkness and the light were not always obvious to me. I slipped into the shadows. My doubts returned. Gradually, I grew more comfortable in the shadows, away from the glare of light. I slowly regained my confidence. I realized that the fit need not be perfect, that if it were there would be no cracks for the light to get through. I needed theory to inform my study; at the same time, I had to leave room for new insights.

One of the intentions of my research was to determine what contribution a 'community of practice' framework could make to the study of social interaction in a classroom setting. Lave and Wenger's work "explores the situated character of human understanding and communication. It takes as its focus the relationship between learning and the social situations in which it occurs" (Hanks, 1991, p. 14). As an explanatory framework, C of P enables one to know not only *how* things work, but *why* they work as they do. In my study, the C of P framework served this purpose in varying ways. Certain aspects about the way in which this community operated puzzled me. A case in point can be found with the 'like pulling teeth' question. I initially focused my attention on why the teacher was not initiating discussion. It was not until I shifted the focus to consider the social context that I was able to understand what was going on. I had to look at the C of P as a whole, not at the teacher alone in order to make sense of the situation–the students played a crucial role in determining the way in which oral discourse was enacted in the classroom. This is one of many examples in which looking at learning as "a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind" (Hanks, 1991, p. 15) enhanced my understanding of what was going on in the research site.

While helpful, the community of practice framework was not adequate for answering all my questions. It allowed me to explain how and why things work as they do, but not necessarily what to do should problems arise within the community. The C of P literature is about socializing people into an existing social system. It does not address well how to deal with inherent tensions and conflicts within communities, nor how to deal with power relations. Rather, it presents an idealized notion of community. It assumes that newcomers are brought into the community–they are considered *legitimate*–which implies they are accepted. What about those who are not incorporated into the community? Two examples from my study come to mind, one from within the classroom community and one from the broader community. By virtue of being a Grade 9 student, Adrena was considered a legitimate peripheral participant. However, for some time she was not accepted into the community. Asians who entered the neighbourhood were being incorporated into the neighborhood, but Natives were not. In both instances, the C of P framework does not take into consideration the structural processes involved (for example, culture, language, class, employment). In this regard, Toohey (2000) notes that "Lave and Wenger (1991) only point to the conflictual nature of social practice" and suggests that "other critical and poststructural theorists (Foucault, 1972, 1979; Gal, 1991; Hall, 1990; Taylor; 1989) have provided ways to discuss the nature of the identity positions and practices learners struggle to appropriate" (p. 126).

Toohey (1998) also suggests possible difficulties with an analysis of only two sorts of participants: newcomers and old-timers, with newcomers moving towards 'full participation' in communities of practice. Kanno (1999), for example, disagreed with Toohey's use of the community-of-practice perspective in L2 research.[4] She argues against the idea of describing language minority students' membership in schools as legitimate peripheral participation. While Lave and Wenger's use of old-timers and newcomers may work in the original apprenticeship cases they refer to, Kanno (1999) does not agree with the application to ESL students, because some children are given more power and prominence than others (in particular, the white English-speaking middle-class students). Although LPP is how language minority students *should* be integrated into the school community, Kanno expects language minority students to be "certainly peripheral, but not legitimate participants in communities of practice" (p. 131). The manner in which this played out in my research site, where the majority of the students were neither white, English-speaking nor middle-class, was interesting. For the most part, at Coalfield School the 'language minority' students were the old-timers. And, *within* the classroom and school community, they tended to be the students with more prominence and power. As there were different ways to be either an old-timer or newcomer (based on ethnicity, for example), at times I found the old-timer/newcomer dichotomy difficult to apply.

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[4] Kanno (1999) does consider the community of practice perspective to have certain merits: its emphasis on learning as opposed to teaching could transform language minority research into a forum in which students' voices could be better heard and it

Another limitations of the C of P framework relates to its use in school contexts. This is not necessarily surprising, as it is apprentice-based and focuses on those types of environments specifically. Lave and Wenger themselves note that they refrain from any systematic treatment of what their work has to say about schooling and acknowledge that legitimate peripheral participation makes a fundamental distinction between learning and intentional instruction (see Chapter 2). Nonetheless, legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice has informed much educational research–as Lave and Wenger hoped it would. A case in point is Haneda's (1997) study of adult students learning Japanese as a foreign language (JFL). Haneda's position is that, despite its theoretical appeal, the community of practice perspective is problematic when applied to learning in school settings, in particular because it does not recognize the significance of the teacher's role. I share Haneda's concern. Although Haneda found that the characteristics of learning in her JFL classroom community fit Lave and Wenger's description of legitimate peripheral participation, her view is that, if the notion of

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opens up a venue for addressing the relationship between students' sociocultural experiences and their language acquisition.

community of practice is to enrich our understanding of classroom learning, it needs to be extended to incorporate the Vygotskian idea of working in the zone of proximal development. From Vygotsky (1978, 1987), Haneda borrowed the notion of more advanced learners, including the teacher, helping to provide for the development of less advanced learners.

Some of the ways in which Emily organized instruction, for example the group work, suggest that she placed a high priority on the social nature of learning. Given the particular dynamics in my study, though, gains the students made through collaboration with the teacher and with peers were not always maximized. Gutierrez and Larson (1994) point to a possible explanation: "The implications of sociocultural views of learning for education are powerful when we consider that most instructional contexts provide little to no opportunity for the kind of scaffolding and apprenticeship that learning as a socially mediated activity requires" (p. 25). This speaks to my study. Students were not always provided with the scaffolding and apprenticeship opportunities they needed. For example, Emily had her students take part in peer tutoring. The majority of the students in the class were ESL learners, and many were considered 'weak' in the mechanics of written language. It may come as no surprise that the peer tutoring was less than successful. In such a situation, the teacher's role necessarily becomes more important. Direct instruction was in order, a practice Lave and Wenger do not advocate, and one in which Emily seldom participated.

On this point, Lave and Wenger allow that the decoupling of learning and intentional instruction does not deny that learning can take place where there is teaching.[5] This, however, "does not blunt the claim that what gets learned is problematic with respect to what is taught" (p. 41). For me, the fact that what was being learned was often not what the teacher was teaching was one of the fascinating aspects of my study. Much of what I examined and have described was not directly related to the teaching or learning of language arts. For example, Adrena learned that there are contexts in which Whites are not at the top of the pecking order. Jamie learned that it was unacceptable behaviour for a girl to sit on the boys' side of the classroom. Darith learned that he could get by with a 'little help from his friend' when he had not done his homework. Roeun learned that he was not content with being seen as 'incapable.' Dith learned that he was not a slow learner when he was allowed to work with his hands. Kim learned what it felt like to be a minority when she visited a school with few Asian students. Hông learned that 'other' people think those who live in the inner city are poor and disadvantaged. Sarun learned that he did not want to flip burgers for the rest of his life. The C of P framework opened up new questions by drawing attention to aspects of learning experience that may be otherwise overlooked.

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[5] What a relief!

> In considering learning as part of social practice, we have focused our attention on the structure of social practice rather than privileging the structure of pedagogy as the source of learning. Learning understood as legitimate peripheral participation is not necessarily or directly dependent on pedagogical goals or official agenda, even in situations in which these goals appear to be a central factor (e.g., classroom instruction, tutoring)...We have argued that learning must be understood with respect to a practice as a whole, with its multiplicity of relations–both within the community and with the world at large. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 114-115)

Although my study focused on the structure of social practice within a classroom setting, a C of P framework also enabled me to look beyond the classroom at the larger social context of the school. Eckert highlights the importance of this:

> One of the greatest errors in education is to assume that the larger social context of the school is irrelevant or even secondary to learning...The social structure of the school is not simply the context of learning; it is part of what is learned. What a student learns in the classroom is indeed a very small other part. (Eckert, 1989, p. 179)

As a teacher, I want to resist Eckert's comment that what a student learns in the classroom is 'small.' However, it became quickly apparent that I could not examine classroom practices without taking into consideration the school and community contexts as well. Once again, a C of P framework was useful, but not sufficient, for looking beyond the classroom door. In conjunction with other offerings from sociocultural theory, though, the framework was sufficient for addressing, if not answering, my questions.

My research has emphasised the need for a study that would examine teachers as a community of practice. Such a study would draw on other aspects of sociocultural theory, in particular, those related to discourse practices. "Discourse, according to sociocultural theory, is at the heart of all teaching and learning, in large part because it is contextually embedded in all activity" (Wells, 2001, p. 101). An important component of this research would to be to consider discourse practices that would enable teachers to adequately reflect on their teaching and provide them with productive ways to talk about their students and their practice. In addition to the work of theorists mentioned in this dissertation (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Gee, 1990, 1992, 1999;Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1987), Bourdieu's (1979, 1984, 1990) theory of habitus would further illuminate such a study.[6]

In this section of the offering chapter, I have written about the ways in which the C of P framework helped me to interpret my data. I have also outlined the areas where C of P was not able to help me and mentioned ways in which I think the framework could be improved for use in school settings. What I have not done is discuss the ways in which my study furthers the C of P research done to date. I will attempt to do that now.

As I reflect upon the research, I am aware that one of the challenges that I faced with the C of P framework is that I began the work intending to use C of P in a particular way, based largely on Kelleen Toohey's longitudinal study of mainstreamed ESL students in primary classrooms. For reasons explained at length earlier in the dissertation, I was unable to proceed as planned. The problem, though, was that I had operationalized the C of P concepts for another study, one with a small number of ESL students who were at the early stages of English language learning, in a grade 7 classroom with a majority of 'mainstream' (white, English speaking) students. Because my research site turned out to be very different, my conceptualizing as to how the framework related to my study was done largely in the moment or in retrospect. I did not begin firmly grounded in terms of how the framework fit my study. Initially, this put me at a disadvantage. In time, I came to see the ways in which C of P could be applied to my research. What would have been helpful to me in the beginning, though, would have been to have a study model that used C of P to examine social interaction/the social nature of learning in a diverse classroom setting at the secondary level.

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[6] In his theory of *habitus,* Bourdieu links social abstractions like the habits, attitudes, preferences, dispositions and actions characteristic of a social class, gender, age group, etc. to the actual life-trajectories of bodily persons (Lemke, 1995).

There were other studies besides Toohey's that used C of P in school-related or other contexts. Bucholtz's (1999) study, for example, proved particularly illuminating because it examined language, gender and identity practices in a community of adolescent nerd girls. However, her study was dissimilar to mine in other significant respects: it drew on sociolinguistic rather than sociocultural theory, and it was not classroom-based. As an educator, it was important to me that my primary contribution be classroom-based. Goldstein's (1997, 2002) research focused on adolescents in culturally/linguistically diverse classroom settings, but did not use a C of P framework. My study provides an example of the type of research that could have proved useful to me as I approached my fieldwork. My research extends the C of P framework by focusing on the specific social, discourse and identity practices in a classroom community of adolescents.

With the C of P framework, this was a particular challenge because of Lave and Wenger's decoupling of learning and intentional instruction (mentioned earlier). Following Haneda (1997), I have argued that, to deepen our understanding of classroom learning, C of P needs to be extended to incorporate the Vygotskian idea of working in the zone of proximal development. The critical role of the teacher scaffolding students was emphasised in both studies. Rather than teacher and student(s), however, Lave and Wenger talk about master and apprentice. Does this set of relations offer classroom-based researchers anything of value? My research suggests that the answer is yes.

In the section of my dissertation where I consider perspectives on academic discourse, I showed that the students were not being adequately 'acquired by' academic discourse. I believe 'the teacher' could find some of the characteristics of 'the master' beneficial. C of P offers a framework based on how language learning/acquisition works–people engage in practice with others who speak the language and they acquire it. The teacher needs to display and work with the students around a shared language, and a potentially shared knowledge base (or one the students come to share). The more engaging the experience and the more experienced the 'master' (or teacher) is in her knowledge and use of that language in practice, the more readily the learner will learn. At the same time, my study demonstrates that there *is* also a need for explicit teaching. In this regard, Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding needs to be added to the C of P framework if it is to be utilized to advantage in classroom settings. That is, I would recommend that people working with the community of practice framework incorporate the concept of scaffolding into the theory. It should be applied both to activities deemed intentional instruction, and other activities in which learning is the focus of attention. As Gee (1992) puts it: "Schools must supply rich, interactive apprenticeships in Discourses to all children, and they must have teachers who know where and how to say 'Look at that' at the right time and place" (p. 137). In this work, classroom settings are my primary concern; however, Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding could offer something of value both to classroom research and apprenticeship contexts as described by Lave and Wenger.

'Third Space Revisited' (Pedagogical Offering)

> To engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences. (hooks, 1994, p.130)

In this dissertation, I have described classroom practices in one Grade 9 language arts class–in particular, social, discourse and identity practices. I examined the ways in which particular practices either facilitated or constrained participation of classroom members. I have shown that while certain practices may appear entrenched, they can also be disrupted. I have questioned whether these practices *should* be disrupted. I have looked beyond the classroom to the broader community to consider the role played by 'others' in constructing identities for the research participants. In doing so, I have come to agree with Toohey (2000) that

> what school practices are determines who particular participants can be, what they can do, and thus what they can learn in that setting....What is done in schools, and what is considered knowledge in schools, are socially and culturally specific; some children will be disadvantaged and others advantaged by the decisions made about these matters. (p. 135).

Not only do school and classroom practices determine who students can be and what students can learn in current settings, but they also play a role in who they will become and what they will learn in subsequent settings. This was emphasized in my study, as the student participants 'prepared' for high school.

I set out to consider what an 'ideal' community of practice would be for the students in this specific Grade 9 language arts class. Along the way I have made various suggestions as to what such a C of P would comprise. For example, students would be provided with apprenticeships into academic discourse, oral and written discourse would include a measure of hands on learning and drama, and adequate scaffolding would be made available to students taking on unfamiliar tasks such as group work. In my mind, one piece of the puzzle in particular has not been satisfactorily answered. I have chosen to center my discussion in this part of the conclusion on an aspect of my study that both fascinated and frustrated me–the 'like pulling teeth' issue.

Regarding this line of inquiry, I return to the notion of 'third space' that I introduced in Chapter 2. Gutierrez et al. (1995) use Bakhtin's (1981) notions of dialogic meaning and social heteroglossia to help illustrate how the classroom is inherently multi-voiced. The authors' position is that while members of the classroom community hold varied expertise in the form of local knowledge, the inscribed knowledge of the teacher and classroom regularly displaces the local and culturally varied knowledge of the students. This displacement of student knowledge creates the space for student counterscript to develop, revealing the inherently multi-voiced and dialogic nature of the classroom. Gutierrez et al. consider that, in the face of a rigidly monologic teacher script, the students' counterscripts have little influence on the teacher's script. Rather, the only space where a true interaction or communication between teacher and student can occur in the classroom is in the middle ground, or 'third space', in which a Bakhtinian social heteroglossia is possible.[7] The researchers suggest that "acknowledging the inherent cognitive and sociocultural benefits that come from the multiple discourses is of particular importance, especially in classrooms populated largely by African, Latino and mixed-raced students" (p. 447).

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[7] Homi Bhabba's (1994) concept of Third Space as a "space of negotiation" could further illuminate this discussion.

Although my research context was different in terms of the ethnic mix, I nevertheless began the research eager to look for instances of 'dialogue in the third space' and to consider their potential for bridging social spaces. As the research progressed, and 'dialogue' was not forthcoming, I abandoned this goal. I was unable to find instances of recitation script, let alone counterscripts, or conversations in the 'third space'. Once again, my research site did not match the literature. Although the teacher's script was *not* rigidly monologic, students' counterscripts were almost nonexistent–they certainly were not scripts of *resistance* (as were those of the students in the Gutierrez et al. study). I did not see how I could apply this inspirational idea to my study. Some time after the research was over, as I was trying to make sense of the data, I realized that the notion of a 'third space' was *exactly* what I needed in order to explain the significance of my research and offer implications for practice. In terms of discourse practices, the crack between the teacher's script and the students' scripts was wide and all too frequently filled with silence. There was a definite need for some sort of middle ground to narrow the gap. Rather than expecting my study to match the literature, I needed to adapt the idea of 'third space conversations' to correspond to my research site.

In his critique of a "new literacy" that calls for increased participation from students, Willinsky (1990) proposes reasons as to why some students choose to remain silent:

> As students already know, there are few forums where all voices are either heard or treated as equal members of the bargaining unit in this language-wide negotiation of meaning. The social construction of meaning...brings students to the crossroads of history and power out of which whole bodies of meaning, in gender, race, and social class, have already been forged for them. (p. 207)

The students in my study had arrived at the crossroads with a unique blend of gender, race, and social class; this union resulted in many and varied silences. The conversations I had imagined happening in my research site involved passionate discussions about literature, with students challenging each other *and* the teacher. I now understand that these conversations would not have happened in my research site, even if

Emily had not avoided classroom discussion. The principal offers her view as to what is needed:

> In our teacher education classes, as well as in our teacher evaluation practices, we demonstrate the value we place on discussion and dialogue. Yet many of our students are taught, either because of culture, customs, or parental experiences, not to 'argue' with the teacher. I think our challenge as teachers is to find other ways to accomplish the same thing but in a way that is more meaningful and more responsive to that particular group of students. It may be that as professionals, we need to structure discussions more to teach the skill, in a safer context. I think that this is an area that requires considerable study. Ruth Patnorev (in email correspondence)

This corresponds with Ward's (1997) point that "the responsibility for changing interactional style to accommodate cultural variability lies with the classroom teacher" (p.66). The solution was not to avoid discussions; rather, the answer lay in finding a middle ground, where student and teacher scripts could meet and merge. What would these conversations look like in my research site? I have no easy answers–I concur with Ruth that this is an area that calls for considerable study. Regarding research on discourse patterns in classrooms and their effects on minority language children, Toohey (2000) suggests 'instructional conversations' (ICs) as an area for future research (see Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Goldenberg (1991) describes ICs as "discussion-based lessons geared toward creating richly textured opportunities for students conceptual and linguistic development" (p. 2). ICs, which draw on students' background knowledge, provide for direct teaching as needed, utilize questioning for which responses may be varied, and elicit extended student contributions, appear to be worth considering for the students in my study.[8] I had to revisit the 'third space' portrayed by Gutierrez et al. The third space that could reasonably be constructed in Emily's classroom was a much quieter space–but it need not be *silent*. It would necessitate students taking small steps out of their comfort zones, at the same time providing a safe space in which to do so.

Although I have framed this 'third space' discussion in terms of 'classroom dialogue', it can be applied to other 'productive learning spaces' as well. For example, Gutierrez et al. (1999) consider how to build 'cultures of collaboration' through 'hybrid language practices.' The authors use the example of one 'rich' literacy activity to illustrate what they mean by hybrid literacy practices. The activity, which took place in an after-school computer club, was a multi-purposed writing activity that utilized mixed genres (for example, letters and narratives), and mixed discourses (including problem-solving, narrative, and academic discourse). The participants were cross-generational (elementary students and undergraduate students) and ethnically diverse (the elementary students were primarily Latino/a, African-American and Tongan, while the undergraduate students represented a mix of European American, Asian American, African-American and Latino/a).

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[8] See Toohey (2000, p. 128) for a complete description of the characteristics of ICs.

This activity appears promising. First, it offers a more productive approach to academic discourse through writing rather than the essay approach (see discourse practices in Chapter 4). Furthermore, "because no one single language or register is privileged, the larger linguistic repertories of participants become tools for meaning making...In a Bakhtinian (1981) sense, hybridity increases the possibility of collaborating and learning" (p. 89). The authors, whose research was conducted in California, note that such language practices challenge current English-only policies that privilege one particular language and minimize learning. Thankfully, we do not currently have the same policies; however, the reader may recall that Coalfield School encouraged the use of English only, albeit for very different reasons (see discourse practices in Chapter 4). While this decision had been made with the best of intentions, at the same time, some students were disadvantaged by this decision–likely, the students who would benefit the most from 'hybrid literacy practices.'

> The important point here is that individual learning cannot be separated from the ways the larger learning context is organized. The goal, then, is to create rich zones of development in which all participants learn by jointly participating in activities in which they share material, sociocultural, linguistic, and cognitive resources. (p. 88)

Such hybrid literacy practices become the tools for mediating literacy learning and serve as a model for imagining how difference and diversity can serve as resources for learning. The notion of 'third space' resonates with other aspects of my research, for example, the need to consider a common ground between cultures. Darren speaks to this in the following comment.

> I look at students from the Cambodian and Vietnamese cultures, and what I really love is the communal aspects of their culture. They take care of each other...But, then again there are aspects of the European individualism that are good, too–the ability to sit down and do your own thing, when other people aren't quite focused. I think in North America we've gone too far the individual route, and maybe in Asia they're too far the communal route. And, it's neat to see some of the kids who now are blending the two. I think there's a ground in the middle where they could meet.

I thought I knew what Darren meant. There was Justin, who had spent 10 years of school with classmates of primarily Cambodian and Vietnamese backgrounds, and seemed to get along with everybody. Or Nouy, who had worked extremely hard to learn English since her arrival from Vietnam and now competed for top place in the class. Keeping in mind that this was a complex topic with other factors involved–students' personalities and family expectations, for instance–I had observed blendings. While I may have dismissed such comments in the early days of the research, I finished the project somewhat humbled in this regard.

In some respects, the school in which I conducted my study was not considered 'typical.' For example, at Coalfield School, students usually positioned as mainstream were in the minority. Schools in Canada in which Cambodian students comprise the majority population are certainly few in number. This is one of the reasons why I had difficulty 'locating' my research in the literature. However, this speaks to the significance of the study. Changing immigration patterns have resulted in shifting populations. My study, while depicting a minority set of circumstances, represents an *increasing* minority. "Students, teachers, administrators, parents, trustees and others associated with schools can look forward to a future where schools display considerably more diversity than they have in the past" (Ryan, 1999, p. 49).[9] I wonder how many actually *look forward* to this reality? As for the research participants, they did not have to look forward to a more diverse future–for the students and teachers in my study, the future had arrived. By and large, diversity at Coalfield School was embraced. Most of the students and teachers I met and spoke with were enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn and teach in a diverse school setting. Various challenges 'came with the territory,' though.

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[9] See Ryan (1999, pp. 49-50) for a list of the characteristics we can expect schools in English-speaking Western countries such as Canada to display.

Lankshear (1997) makes the observation that "despite changing approaches to and technologies of learning and remediation in classrooms, we continue to find familiar patterns of scholastic achievement and 'underachievement' being reproduced along lines of race-ethnicity, social class, gender and language background" (pp. 1-2). This speaks to the heart of my study. In my research, I have examined aspects of race-ethnicity, social class, gender and language background and patterns of scholastic underachievement hold a prominent place amongst my findings. I hope I have contributed something to the ongoing discussion of "why children from some minority groups fail in school at a disproportionate rate as compared to children from the 'mainstream,' middle-class white culture" (Gee, 1992, p. 119). In closing, I will make brief recommendations and suggestions for future research in each of these areas, at the same time acknowledging their interconnectedness.

Because my research took other paths, I did not pursue to any depth my original focus on ESL students' integration into mainstream classes. This remains an extremely important issue, however.[10] "In many English-speaking countries with rapidly changing demographics and large numbers of ESL students entering public schools, many challenges face minority-language students, as well as their teachers, parents, and majority-language classmates" (Duff, 2001, p. 104).[11] Although the majority of ESL students in Canadian schools are now mainstreamed, many of the teachers working with these students do not feel adequately prepared, as can be seen by the following comments, made by Darren and Barry respectively:

> Am I happy with my delivery to my ESL students? No, right now I'm not. ESL is one of the areas that as a teacher I don't feel I'm meeting the needs of my students. I'm constantly trying to develop strategies to meet the ESL needs within the classroom. It's something I'm working on.

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[10] I have enough data to complete a second dissertation on this topic; however, I had to make difficult choices as to my focus.

[11] See Duff (2001) for a more thorough discussion of these challenges.

> It's something I'm still struggling with, something I still have a lot to learn about. The staff has been pretty supportive, but I feel like I've learned nowhere near what I need to learn about dealing with ESL students.

Given demographic trends and the limits of pre-service teacher preparation programs, mainstream classroom teachers are learning to educate ESL students on the job (Clair, 1995). The teachers at Coalfield School emphasized the value of in-service sessions on ESL students; they also relied on Lee, the school community coordinator, who worked with 'newcomer' ESL students. I cannot overstate the need for teachers to be provided with this type of support. Regarding students, Harklau (2000) makes the point that, in the US context, in spite of a growing body of recent research, secondary school level immigrant and bilingual students are an underresearched population.

In the Canadian context, Roessingh has been involved in several studies involving ESL students at the secondary level. Although I cannot elaborate here, these studies, which discuss challenges associated with the transition to high school (for example, cultural adjustment to high school, ESL dropout, adjunct support, and timetabling) suggest that many high school ESL students need further support if they are to successfully complete high school (see Roessingh, 1995, 1999; Roessingh & Field, 2000; Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001; Watt, Roessingh & Bosetti, 1996).[12] The results from a longitudinal study which show a dropout rate for ESL high school students of 74% are especially alarming (Watt & Roessingh, 1994, 2001). The authors (2001) suggest that the "final challenge for researchers in this area is to privilege the examination of issues that promote equitable educational decisions…for students whose academic success is critical to the future of Canada" (p. 220).

Issues of ethnicity/culture seemed to affect almost every aspect of my study. Pon (2000) maintains that "although Asian Canadians comprise one of the earliest and fastest-growing immigrant groups in Canada, there is a dearth of research on their education. Most glaring is the absence of critical discussion of races and racism in relation to their schooling" (p. 139). This absence surfaced in relation to my study. Pon goes on to explain that the absence of Asian Canadians from debates about antiracism education is linked to the context within which antiracism education emerged and the prevalent view of Asians as "model minorities."[13] The dominant view that Asian students do extremely well at school position Asian Canadians outside, or on the margins of, debates about antiracism education. With exceptions, the Asian students in my study did not correspond to the stereotype of the "model minority." Although they were not troublemakers in terms of behaviour, neither were they, by and large, high academic achievers. Pon makes the point that "antiracism education in Canada is dominated by a Black/White paradigm of race relations that situates historical and contemporary narratives of racial minorities in the shadows of the Black/White encounter" (p. 140).[14] I cannot engage in a debate on the merits of antiracist education here. However, this corresponds to the group activities and discussion on racism the students took part in (see Chapter 5), which were framed almost exclusively in terms of Black/White relations, despite the teacher's attempts to bring the focus 'closer to home.' While it is impossible to predict the future shape of shifting populations, there is a need for research that shatters stereotypes and reflects other configurations.

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[12] In contrast, see Derwing et al. (1999) for a discussion of factors that affect the success of ESL high school students.

As classrooms become increasingly diverse, there is a need for greater understanding of how culture and class in combination with gender influence school achievement in complex ways (Romaine, 1999). In my study gender was inextricably intertwined with ethnicity and class; it was impossible to tease them apart. Perhaps the most salient theme to emerge in relation to gender was that of boys' patterns of underachievement. Wang (2000) notes that while research examining boys' notions of masculinity is on the rise, little attention has been paid to teenage boys, in particular Asian boys. She makes the point that many Canadian and U.S. schools have experienced an increase in the number of students from various Asian cultures–many possess a mix of Asian and Western cultural ideals that affect how they become gendered beings. While I was unable to examine this topic in depth, study findings concur that this is an area for further research. Conversely, my study also points to the need for research in the area of Asian girls' experiences of schooling–for example, how to bridge home and school communities of practice.

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[13] See Lee (1996) for a discussion of the "model minority" stereotype.

[14] See also Omi and Takagi (1996) for more on this topic.

I spoke to the topic of social class in the section on identity practices. I have one more point to make. In a chapter on language, identity and social class, Gee and Crawford (1998) use discourse analysis to describe the ways in which two teenage girls make sense of their lives: a 14-year-old working-class girl and a 15-year old upper-middle class girl. The authors were interested in learning what these different "kinds" of teenagers could tell them about how social class (in the U.S.) helps shape language and identity as well as what it means to be or not be school affiliated (and what implications this holds for teachers and classrooms). Parallels can be drawn to Eckert's study (1989, 2000) which focuses on the role of the Jock and Burnout categories in the reproduction of adult social class: "…it is not surprising that in the high school, middle class kids are more likely to be jocks, while working class kids are more likely to be burnouts" (p. 40). I wondered what happened when all the students were working class kids. By extension, would they all be burnouts?

Gee and Crawford (1998) suggest that "school affiliation is not a simple matter. Even successful kids can be, at a deeper level, unschool affiliated" pp. 242-43). What about the reverse? From my study, and from working with Native students in band-run schools in their own community, I knew that *unsuccessful kids could be school affiliated.* I can think of several students in my study who, while not academically successful, were nevertheless school affiliated–students like Sarun, Darith, and Dith. While they seldom did their homework, they rarely missed a day of school, played on sports teams, and attended cultural functions at the school with their families. They were definitely school affiliated–with Coalfield School, the community school, in their neighbourhood, which they had attended since kindergarten. This also speaks to the problem of stereotypes (which I have addressed in various places) as well as the need to look at success in other ways. Perceptions of students can limit students' chances as much, if not more, than the perceived 'problem' (whether it be related to language, ethnicity, gender, class, or something else).

How to address complex issues related to the increasing diversity in schools in our teacher education programs? I posed this question to Barry:

> I guess I wouldn't expect the teacher education program to be able to do that. I think if you drop somebody in the middle of a slum and say, okay,

> you're living here for the next week, here's $10.00, that might help. Or if you sent them off to Africa or India or some other very different culture, that would perhaps be a help, but I don't think you can sit down with a book and piece of paper and explain to us what it's going to be like.

Barry raises a reasonable concern–that it is difficult to 'teach' these issues in a university course. This may be one of the reasons why "too few teachers have been exposed during their teacher education programs to appropriate conceptualizations of teaching for students from groups that we as a society have marginalized and normalized" (Osborne, 1996, p. 286). Delpit (1995), however, considers the teacher education program itself to be a primary source of stereotyping: "It is in these programs that teachers learn that poor students and students of color should be expected to achieve less than their 'mainstream' counterparts" (p. 172). I like to think otherwise–that we are doing a better job than Delpit suggests. Given my experiences teaching in Native communities, though, I know that many damaging stereotypes persist. I agree with Delpit that learning about cultural diversity "can perhaps best become a reality if teacher education programs include diverse parents, community members, and faculty among those who prepare future teachers, and take seriously the need to develop in those teachers the humility required for learning from the surrounding context when entering a culturally different setting" (Delpit, 1995, p. 56). This is a huge and complex issue that I have only touched on here. Much research has been done on the challenges and possibilities of introducing student teachers to issues of diversity (for example, see Goodwin, 1994; Grant & Zozakiewicz, 1995; Liston & Zeichner, 1996; Phuntsog, 1995; Scott, 1995). I should note, however, that the majority of this research has been done in American contexts; there is a considerable need for research into this aspect of teacher education in Canadian contexts. In addition to being advantageous for students, the study mentioned earlier about 'hybrid literacy practices' (Gutierrez et al., 1999) holds promise for teacher education programs as well.

In several important 'school-related' ways, the student participants could be seen as 'disadvantaged' (for example, English was their second language, their parents were 'uneducated', they lived in the inner-city, they did not have the latest textbooks, their science lab was inadequate). This description represents an incomplete and limited perspective. Could the same students (and families) be seen as 'advantaged' in other ways? While inadequately prepared in some ways for academic success in 'mainstream' terms, they were perhaps better prepared for life in 'today's' terms. "In a world at five to twelve (= on the verge of self-destruction),"[15] Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p. 38) emphasizes the need for

> bilinguals as mediators. Those who are bi-something (bilingual, bidialectal, bicultural) have been forced to look at *two* different languages, dialects, cultures from the inside. It is easier for us bilinguals to understand both parties.

Even Adrena, who through most of this dissertation was not very sensitive to or appreciative of her classmates' cultural backgrounds, understood this. Her remarks are made in reference to the newspaper article, *Leveling the Playing Field* (see 'Heart of the City' in Chapter 4). Adrena had taken exception to the manner in which the author had represented inner-city students in the article:

> It's stupid, totally branding us like this. She has more status, and, like, probably lives up town, but in ten years who's going to be running the country? It could be some of the kids in this school. Like, if Darith really concentrated, I'm sure he could teach, like, whatever he speaks, 'cause he can speak it really well. Like, we're going to need interpreters–that's who these people are. That's what they're going to be to our nation.[16]

In closing, I return to the topic of 'dialogue.' I have stressed the need for the students to learn 'how to talk' in school-expected ways. However, I cannot imagine how any of the complex issues I have presented in this dissertation–language, culture, class, gender–can be productively addressed without dialogue. We all need to better learn 'how to talk.'

> There may be no pat political 'answer' to the world's problems. However, the important point is not the *answer*—just as in a dialogue, the important point is not the particular opinions—but rather the softening up, the opening up, of the mind, and looking at all the opinions. If there is some sort of spread of that attitude, I think it can slow down the destruction. (Bohm, 1990, p. 39)

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[15] If it was five to twelve in 1988, given the current state of world affairs, I assume that the minute hand has moved a little closer to midnight.

[16] The language that Darith speaks is Khmer. While these students may very well not be running the country in the future, Adrena's point about their potential as interpreters/ mediators is pertinent.

Just as there may be no pat political 'answer' to the world's problems, neither are there any easy solutions to the complex challenges facing educators today. Dialogue, however, has the potential to accelerate constructive approaches to the challenges we face in this ever-evolving world.

EPILOGUE

You can add up the parts
but you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march,
there is no drum.
Every heart
to love will come
but like a refugee.

The end of day had finally arrived–I was finished my dissertation. I had added up the parts; however, as Cohen points out, I certainly did not have the sum. Neither was there a drum beat. I had made an offering, but it was an imperfect one. There were no easy solutions to the challenges I faced and the questions I asked over the course of the research and writing.

I have emphasised the importance of 'talking' in the dissertation. In doing so, I have said much. But, I also listened–to my doubts, to the silences, to the theorists, to my supervisors, and in the end, to my heart. The most important listening I did, though, was to the research participants. In many ways, their experiences of school and life were very different than mine. Delpit (1988) points out that communicating across cultures takes a special kind of listening that can be painful "because it means turning yourself inside out… and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze."

> It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue…(W)e must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness. In other words, we must become ethnographers in the true sense. (p. 297)

It was not only not easy; at times it had been painful. But, if this was what it meant to become an ethnographer, then I had become one. My world had not been turned upside down in the way the 'Killing Fields' had turned the children of Cambodia's world upside down. The research experience had, however, humbled me. My heart had come to love, but like a refugee. And, although the research project had long since ended, the research participants lived on inside my head. Their words have shaped mine, and I offer them to you here, in the hopes that you will carry on the dialogue.

A Post Script after the oral defense of this document

> Those of us in the community of qualitative researchers find that inevitably our writing has impact on ourselves and others. These after-effects are often unforeseen and most times have more to do with the process than with the topic…(G)iven the investment of self and life that goes into writing, more mileage is possible if we expect more and value more our hard-won findings and insights, if we burn to communicate what we believe important. (Ely et al., 1997, p. 370)

I burned to communicate what I thought important throughout the pages of this dissertation. In the final chapter, I highlighted the most important messages I wanted to convey to potential readers in the form of 'offerings': methodological, theoretical and pedagogical. Now that the writing is over and I reflect on the work, I realize that yet another contribution of this work relates to the research *process* itself.

When I wrote my master's thesis, the most important lesson I (began to) learn was 'to let go.' With my doctoral dissertation, it seems that what I have most needed to learn has been to 'trust the process.' I began my first chapter with a quotation by Ely et al. (1997): "Qualitative researchers are interested in telling, and are often consumed by the need to present their stories of research as an ongoing journey. Their writings must, therefore, reflect the process of research" (p. 52). This described me well. I wrote my dissertation as a story, reflecting the process from beginning to end. I laid bare my many doubts and concerns, from worrying that I was unable to conduct the original project to dissatisfaction with the way the research was not collaborative in nature. Several readers of this dissertation have commented on this aspect of my writing–that it is honest, frank, brave even. From my perspective, though, I represented my research this way because *I had to*. It is difficult to explain, but I felt almost as if I had no choice. I did not consider that the way I wrote my dissertation–making the process explicit–could be of value to others. In retrospect, I realize that others could well gain from my experience.

Yet, what is not as transparent is the process of writing itself. Although, at some level, I clung to Ely et al.'s words that "the process *is* the product" (p.52), I did not embrace their full meaning. I resisted much about the process along the way. I expected to complete a literature review, conduct the fieldwork, transcribe the interviews, and analyse the data. But, when it came to the writing, I expected that I should be able to write the dissertation in what I considered to be a timely and efficient manner. One of my supervisors told me that "you will know when the writing is done, but there are *no shortcuts*." Desperate to finish by the end of that summer (because of my heavy teaching load during the year), I did not want to believe her. I wanted to forgo the *process*. When I did not finish that summer, I felt that I had wasted time. The next summer, when I returned to the writing, I realized that the time had actually been well spent–a part of the process. I had much conceptualizing to do; I had not been ready to just 'write it up.' As difficult as it was for me, I had to admit that my supervisor was right–there were no shortcuts. For me, this was most certainly a "hard-won insight." I learned so much from the process–about research, about thinking, about writing, about myself. What I wish is that I had surrendered to the process earlier, rather than resisting it for so long. If I could pass on one *overall* message to potential readers of this dissertation it would be to 'trust the process.'

Other readers of this dissertation have commented on the apologetic tone of the work. Regarding this concern, I can honestly say that (in the end) my intention was not to apologize for the work because it did not go as planned. Rather, the 'cracked/flawed' metaphor served me well over the course of this long and arduous journey. Although I still would be interested to pursue something akin to my original study in the future, I no longer doubt that the dissertation I ended up with is, itself, of value. I have accepted the limitations, but I have not settled for less. And, I have come to truly understand that "the process *is* the product" (Ely et al.,1997, p.52).

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

List of topics addressed in the interviews

Student Interviews:

Background information

- where born (probe–if not Canada, when and why to Canada?)
- where else lived
- first language learned
  - if not English (when and how English learned?, describe home language use, where else L1 spoken? which language known best?)
  - if English (other languages spoken?)

Schooling experiences

- how long attended Coalfield School? other schools attended?
- grade 9 experience (being in grade 9, describe typical school day, community events attended at school, who are friends and why, attending a multicultural school, probe re cliques, describe self as student, relations with teachers)
- school language use (when first language used at school? learning experiences as an ESL student or experiences with ESL classmates)

Language arts class

- ask re class assignments/events(reading/writing, group projects, oral presentations, racism unit, medieval feast)
- probe re issues surfaced (gender segregation, teacher comment about 'community', newspaper articles about racism and inner city students)

Transitions to high school/future plans

- plans for high school (school choice, course/program selection)
- future plans (career day, importance of school, role of teachers, parents' ideas)

Staff Interviews:

Background information

- teacher education preparation, where else taught?

School experiences

- working in a multicultural school, with ESL students, with grade 9 students (describe class as a group)

Views on issues surfaced

- "like pulling teeth," "this community," "afraid we'll spit poison"

Reaction to newspaper articles

- elimination of racial discrimination, inner city students

Teacher education

- challenges, recommendations for pre-service and in-service education